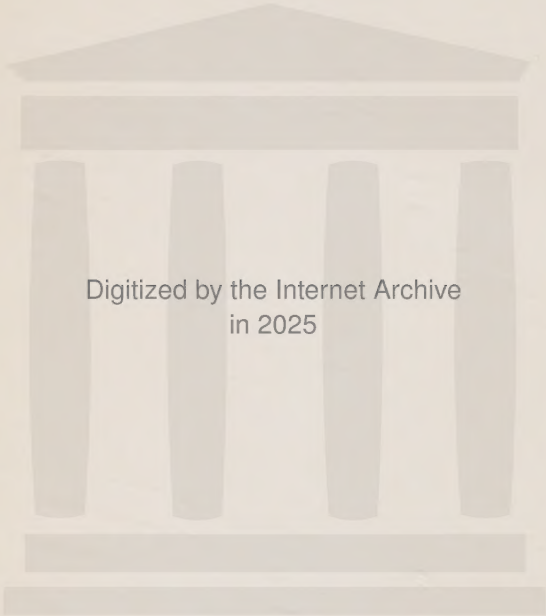

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THOUGHTS AND TEACHINGS OF LACORDAIRE

From a Photograph by Petit, Paris

Lacordaire

LACORDAIRE, HENRI DOMINIQUE, 1802-1861.

Thoughts and Teachings of Lacordaire

"Youths need a masculine religion, if it is to carry captive their restless imaginations and wild intellects, as well as to touch their susceptible hearts."—NEWMAN.

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THE first edition of this book has been exhausted for some time. It was favourably received by the Catholic press of the United Kingdom and America. Necessary emendations have been made in this edition, additional passages and some explanatory matter have been added, and references made to the sources whence the passages were taken.

The centenary of the greatest master of sacred eloquence in the nineteenth century seems an appropriate time for this publication.

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Thoughts and Teachings of Lacordaire

I

Subdeacon

THE good and grave Sulpicians hesitated long before having orders conferred on their brilliant and liberal pupil. Many of his relatives looked unfavourably on the new direction his life had taken, and he sought to mitigate their opposition in a letter to his step-brother.

I KNOW not, my brother, whether I ought to tell you of my irrevocable admission to the ecclesiastical state. It took place last Saturday, when I received the orders to which are attached the vow of perpetual chastity and that of recitation of the breviary office. I accepted this engagement only after two-and-a-half years of trial and reflection. In former ages you would have felicitated me; to-day you forgive me. Thus do the thoughts of men change! Thus what was encompassed by the respect of all classes, what was sought by men of the most brilliant genius in order to render their talents more sacred for themselves and others, what made Bossuet, Fénelon and Vincent de Paul, has become of little value in this generation. I know not what weight will attach to its judgment in the future. Time alone is impartial, and we shall be here no

longer when the question is decided. Happily the heart is distinct from the intellect, and a difference of ideas is not necessarily a difference of sentiments. Friendship and esteem are from the heart; the heart it is which judges actions, which appreciates devotedness, which understands the respect which we owe to the beliefs of men, even when we do not share them. In the general conflict of opinions which, from Europe to America, prevents any two men of mind from agreeing on two ideas, you have taken the modern side; I have taken the ancient. I have chosen what I have found strongest, most striking, most extraordinary in the world, *the only religion which is certain*, as was said not long since by an Anglican deist who has made many Catholics. Experience has shown me more and more clearly that I have done right, and the Christian life has demonstrated to me the Christian dogma. What then do you desire? If we cannot shake hands in the temple, we must do so in the peristyle, and fraternize between the two camps.—VILLARD.

II

Coercion of the Spiritual Power

IN 1830 a sub-prefect of Aubusson, with an armed force, broke open the church and carried into it the dead body of a man who had been refused Christian burial. Lacordaire, in *L'Avenir*, thus addressed the priests of France:

ONE of your brethren refused a man who died outside your communion the words and the prayers of Christian farewell. . . . Your brother did well: he acted as a free man, as a priest of the Lord, resolved to preserve his lips pure from

servile benedictions. Woe to him who blesses contrary to his conscience, who speaks of God with a venal heart! Woe to the priest who utters lies by the side of a grave! who conducts souls to the judgment of God through fear of the living and for vile pay! Your brother has done well: are we the gravediggers of the human race? have we made a pact with it to flatter its ashes, more wretched than the courtier on whom the death of the prince confers the right to treat him as his life deserved? Your brother has done well; but a phantom pro-consul decided that such independence did not suit a citizen so vile as a Catholic priest. He ordered the corpse to be placed before the altar, were even violence necessary for the purpose, and the forcing open the doors of the asylum where the God of all men reposes under the protection of our country's law, under the guardianship of liberty.

His will has been accomplished. A platoon of the National Guard carried the coffin into the church. Force and death have violated the domicile of God, amid profound peace, without any popular tumult, by the order of the Administration. The domicile of a citizen may not be violated, save by the intervention of the law. The law has not even been invoked to say to religion: Veil thy face for a moment before my sword. A mere sub-prefect, a removable employé, has sent forth a corpse from its house, protected against arbitrary power by thirty millions of men, into the house of God. He has done this while you slept tranquilly in reliance on the solemn assurances in the Charter of August 7, while you were required to pray for blessings upon the king, as the chief of the liberty of a great nation. He has done this in

presence of the law, which declares that public worship is free. And what is free worship if its temple is not free, if its altar is not free, if men may bring ashes there with arms in their hands? He has outraged half the men of France, he—this sub-prefect! . . .

But the man who has insulted so many Frenchmen in their religion, who has treated a place in which men bend their knee, with more irreverence than would be permitted in a stable—this man, he is at his fireside tranquil and self-satisfied. You would have made him turn pale if, with a staff in your hand and a hat upon your head, you had taken your dishonoured God and borne Him into some hut made with planks of pine, declaring that you would not again expose Him to insult in the temples of the State.

III

No more Ancestral Homes

How happy is he who is born and dies under the same roof without having ever quitted it! But such a state of things is no longer to be found in the world; even the rich are vagabond like others. Palaces have ceased to be hereditary as well as cabins. We are all like those wood-cutters who erect a shelter for themselves for a few days at the foot of a tree, and, having destroyed all around them, cut down also the trunk against which they rested their heads, and go away. Let us, at least, establish an eternal friendship in the midst of this world, where nothing durable or immovable remains; let our heart be for us the house of our fathers.—*Letters.*

IV

Freedom of Speech

LACORDAIRE was tried, with De la Mennais, by a jury, at the Assize Court of the Seine, on a charge of exciting hatred and contempt of the Government on the occasion of Louis Philippe's appointment of bishops in 1831. He spoke in his own defence:

I RISE with a recollection which cannot pass from my mind. When the priest in olden times stood up in the midst of the people, there arose at the same time something which, as well as his person, excited profound love. To-day, accused as I am, I know that my title of priest is mute in my defence, and I resign myself to the fact. The people despoiled the priest of that antique love which they bore him when the priest despoiled himself of an august part of his character, when the man of God ceased to be the man of liberty.

I am but a young man, an obscure Catholic; my public experiences do not extend beyond three months. . . . And nevertheless, gentlemen, I feel that I must tell you the secret sentiments of my soul, which will only be a proof of my good faith in so far as you will recognize the sincerity of my words. . . .

I was very young; God had perished in my soul, and liberty had ceased to reign in my country. God had perished in my soul, because my birth was in the dawn of the nineteenth century, amid uproar and storms; liberty reigned not in my country, because, after great misfortunes, God had given to France a man still greater than these misfortunes. . . .

I was still very young. I came to this capital, where curiosity, imagination, the thirst for knowledge made me believe that the secrets of the world would be revealed to me. Its weight overwhelmed me, and I was a Christian —a Christian and a priest. Pardon me, gentlemen, for rejoicing at it; for never did I know liberty better than when I received with the sacred unction the right to speak of God. The universe opened before me, and I saw that there was in man something inalienable, divine, eternally free—speech!

The words of the priest were confided to me, and I was told to carry them to the ends of the earth, and that no one had the right to seal my lips for a single day of my life. I went forth from the temple with this great destiny, and I was encountered upon the threshold by the laws and by servitude. . . .

If I have incited to disobedience to the laws, I have committed a grave fault; for the laws are sacred. They are, after God, the salvation of nations, and no one should show them greater respect than the priest, commissioned as he is to teach to the people whence life comes to them and whence death. Nevertheless, I admit, I do not feel for the laws of my country that love of which we have heard so much, and which the people of old cherished for their laws. When Leonidas died, these words were engraved upon his tomb: "Let him who passes by go tell the Spartans that we have died in obedience to their sacred laws." I do not desire, gentlemen, that this inscription should be engraven upon my tomb; I do not desire to die for the sacred laws of my country. For the time has passed when the law was the venerable expression of the

traditions, the customs, and the gods of a people: all is changed. There have been many epochs, many opinions, many tyrannies. The axe and the sword clash one with the other in our confused legislation, and to die for such laws would be to adore at one and the same time glory and infamy. There is one law, however, which I respect, which I love and which I will defend: it is the Charter of France; not that I am attached with unchanging ardour to the variable forms of representative government, but because the Charter stipulates for liberty, and, in the anarchy of the world, there remains for men but one country, liberty. . . .

I have protested against the nominations of bishops emanating from the civil power, or rather emanating from our oppressors, which is the term I used; and, as the Advocate-General has dwelt upon it for a long time, I dwell upon it also. Our oppressors! The word has caused you pain. You have called me to account for it; you have looked at my hands to see whether they bore the impress of chains. My hands are free, Mr Advocate-General; but my hands, they are not myself. Myself is my thought, my speech, and I tell you I find it oppressed in my country, this divine self, this self of man, this thought, this speech, this self, in fine! Yes, you would bind my hands, and it would not be of much consequence; for it would be justice or it would be violence; justice would not be oppression, and violence might be met by violence. But, if you do not bind my hands, you bind my thoughts; you do not permit me to teach, me to whom it has been said: *Docete.* The seal of your laws is upon my lips: when shall it be broken? I have then called you my

oppressors, and I distrust bishops from your hand!

I have reproached the Government with real wrongs; I have reproached it with energy, but without any intention to incite Catholics to despise or hate it. Resting on Providence, in which faith ever centres our thoughts, we look forth upon the empires which fall and those which rise, with thoughts more pure than those which agitate man, when he sees in these sovereign catastrophes only the collision of human interests. The liberty of the Church and of the world appears to us to be the term of the secret designs of God, and thus it is also that we form a judgment of the events which have changed the face of France. If they contribute to the enfranchisement of the human conscience, we will give them a place in our love; if they betray their appointed destiny, they cannot expect from us eternal pledges which are due only to our country, to liberty, to God—three things which never die. . . .

My duty is accomplished. Yours, gentlemen, is to dismiss me absolved from this accusation. It is not for myself that I ask it. . . . I ask you for my acquittal as a step towards the alliance of faith and liberty, as a gage of peace and reconciliation. The Catholic clergy have done their duty, they have cried aloud to their fellow-citizens, they have called to them in words of love; it is for you to respond. I ask it of you, moreover, that those subaltern despots, resuscitated from the empire, may learn, in the obscurity of their province, that there is also justice for Catholics in France, and that they can no longer be sacrificed to antiquated prejudices, to the hatred of an age which henceforth shall have passed away.

Such, then, is my case, gentlemen. I call upon you to acquit John Baptist Henry Lacordaire, and to find that he has not been wanting in his duty, that he has demeaned himself as a good citizen, that he has defended his God and his liberty; and, gentlemen, I will do so all my life.—*L'Avenir*, February 8, 1831.

The two accused were acquitted.

V

The Cholera Hospital

Paris, April, 1832.

THERE are here neither Sisters of Charity, nor chaplain, nor priests of the parish. My presence and that of two others is indeed tolerated. I have the least part of the work, and each day I reap a modest harvest for eternity. The greater number of the sick do not confess, and the priest is present only as the deputy of the Church, coming timidly to see whether he can find some soul which belongs to the flock. . . . Here and there one or two make their confession. Others are dying, without hearing and without voice. I place my hand upon their brow, and I repeat, confiding in the divine mercy, the words of absolution. Rarely do I leave without being glad that I had come. Yesterday a woman was brought in, and by her pillow was a soldier, her husband. I approach; and as I am in lay attire, the soldier asks me in a low voice if a priest can be had. *I am a priest.* One is happy to find himself in a position to save a soul, and do what is pleasing to a man.—*Letters.*

VI

A Project of 1832

I PROPOSE to bury myself in the depths of th country, to live only for a little flock, to find a my joy in God and in the fields. One can easil see that I am a simple man without ambitior Adieu to great labours! adieu to renown an great men! I have known the vanity of them and I only desire henceforth to live obscure an good. Some day, when Montalembert sha have grown grey in the midst of ingratitude an celebrity, he will come to see upon my brow th remains of our common youth. We will wee together by the hearth of the presbytery; he wi render me justice before we both die; I will bles his children. . . . As for me, a poor Catholi priest, I shall have no children to grow under m eyes and survive me, nor domestic hearth, nor church brilliant with science and sanctity. Bor in mediocre times, I will pass through life ami things little worthy of the memory of men; I wi try to be good, simple, pious, hoping in th future disinterestedly because I will not see i labouring for those who perhaps will see it, nc accusing Providence, which might afflict wit more ills a life of little merit.—*Ibid.*

VII

Last Letter to De La Mennais

December 11, 1832.

I WILL leave La Chesnaie this evening. I leave it from motives of honour, convinced that henceforth my life would be useless to you, because of the difference in our ideas regarding the Church and society, which has only increased from day to day, notwithstanding my sincere efforts to follow the development of your opinions. I do not think that during my life, or for a long time after, the Republic can be established in France or in any other place in Europe, and I can take no part in a system which rests on a contrary persuasion. Without renouncing my liberal ideas, I believe that the Church has had very wise reasons, amid the profound corruption of parties, for refusing to move as rapidly as we would have desired. I respect her thoughts and my own. Perhaps your opinions are more just, more profound, and, considering your natural superiority to me, I ought to be convinced of it; but reason is not the whole of man, and, as I cannot eradicate from my being the ideas which separate us, it is right that I terminate a community of life which is an advantage to me and a burden to you. Not alone honour, but my conscience compels me to this, for I must turn my life to some account for God, and, being unable to follow you, what could I do here but weary you, discourage you, hamper your projects and annihilate myself?

You will never know in this life how I have

suffered for the past year through fear alone
causing you pain. I have thought only of yo
in all my hesitations, my perplexities, my doubt
and, how hard soever may one day be my ex
istence, no anguish of the heart will ever equ
that which I have experienced. I leave you t
day tranquil as regards the Church, higher
public estimation than you have ever been,
exalted above your enemies that no longer a
they of any account; it is the most propitiou
moment I can choose to cause you a pang whic
believe me, will spare you a much greater.
know not yet what I shall do, whether I shall g
to the United States or remain in France,
what position I shall occupy. Wherever I ma
be, you shall have proofs of the respect and a
tachment which I will ever entertain in yo
regard; and I pray you to accept of this ass
rance which comes from a sorrowful heart.

VIII

The Religious Orders in 1839

We live in days when a man who desires
become poor and the servant of all has mo
difficulty in accomplishing his wish than
amassing a fortune or making for himself
name. Nearly all the European powers, kin
and journalists, partizans of absolute monarch
or of liberty, are leagued against the voluntar
service of self, and never in the history of th
world has there been such fear of a man goi
about with naked feet and a cassock of po
stuff upon his back.

If the religious were, as formerly, possesso

f vast patrimonies, preserving them and augmenting them by civil privileges, if their vows, ecognized by the public authority, imparted to nem a power other than that which springs from consent renewed from day to day, a character ther than that of the most absolute liberty, one ould understand the alarm of all powers and all arties. Some would condemn the privileges for ne sole reason that they are privileges; others ould be alarmed for the revenue, deprived of ne advantages which accrue to it from the rapid ransfer of property from hand to hand; others ould declare individual liberty and liberty of onscience menaced by religious engagements, aving for sole guarantee the interior perseerance of the soul in the same dispositions; thers would not endure establishments from hich modern society had not removed, by some mportant modification, the seal of the past. All hese considerations are comprehensible.

What is inexplicable is that a few men weary f the passions of the blood and of pride, filled ith a love for God and man which detaches nem from themselves, cannot come together in heir own house, and there, without privileges, ithout vows recognized by the State, bound only y their conscience, live on 500 francs a-year ach, occupied with those services which huanity may not always comprehend, but which, n any case, do harm to nobody. This is inexlicable, yet such is the fact. And when we, namoured friends of this age, born in the very idst of it, when we demanded of it liberty to elieve nothing, it granted it. When we deanded of it liberty to aspire to all positions nd to all emoluments, it granted it. When we emanded of it liberty to influence its destiny

by treating, still young as we were, the grave questions, it granted it. When we demanded it wherewith to live at our ease, it was con plaisant. But now when, penetrated by th divine elements which also move this age, w demand of it liberty to follow the inspirations our faith, to have no longer pretensions to any thing, to live poor with some friends moved b the same desires as ourselves, we find ourselv obstructed, placed under the ban of I know n how many laws, while nearly all Europe woul if necessary, unite to crush us.—*Memoir*, ch. i.

IX

Religious Vows

A vow! an irrevocable act! The tyranny of moment over all the future! It is the sam objection as that made by the partizans divorce against the indissolubility of marriag the love of a day binds you for ever! Th natural family, like the religious family, is su ject to the law of perpetuity, of the dominati of the past over the future, and it appears th this objection is not so formidable, seeing tha despite it, marriage has not ceased to be gen rally indissoluble since the time of Ada Moreover, what past is not bound up with t future? What moment in human life is real irrevocable? We persuade ourselves that escape what is past; but though we may repe of it, we are not free of the duties which resu from it, and repentance even consecrates the Although this parity between the natural fami and the religious family suffices as an apolo

for the latter, we are, nevertheless, far from accepting this line of defence; for the vow of the married is under the protection of the penal code, whilst the vow of the religious is under the protection of his conscience; that is to say, force maintains the indissolubility of marriage, whilst liberty alone maintains the indissolubility of the cloistral tie. If the religious grow tired, he can go away: what is to prevent him? His will alone, his daily-renewed adhesion to his promise, his persevering love of God. It is true that his vow is a law of obligation; but this law is his own work, and he obeys it only so long as he wills. To make the law and to obey it voluntarily—is not this the highest expression of liberty?

If a vow is sacred because it is a free act in its inception and in its execution, it is still more so when considered in its essence; for, in this point of view, it is an intimate relation of the soul with God, an act of religion. Here the conscience proclaims its inviolability. It asks who has the right to forbid it, under any penalty whatsoever, or to encroach upon its chosen relation with God. A vow is but an act of faith whereby the soul, making a promise to God, believes that its promise is accepted by Him. Take away faith, always revocable because it is a virtue, and a vow ceases to be a bond for man. The proscription of a vow is, then, the proscription of an act of faith. So that a contract thus conceived would be valid: 'We, the undersigned, put our fortune in common; we bind ourselves to live together so long as we please, and agree that those who remain shall succeed to the property of those who leave, those who live to the property

of those who die." But add to this one word only, and say: "We bind ourselves *before God*, etc.," the contract becomes illegal, because it is placed under the safeguard of an act of faith, because the thought of God intervenes between the contractors, and there is a vow. Without this act of faith you would have lived tranquilly in your house with your friends: this act of faith changes all. Gendarmes will be sent to your door and into the interior of your house; you will perhaps invoke the rights of property, of domicile, of individual liberty: they will reply to you that all these things are most sacred, but that *liberty of conscience* being much more so, they are obliged, at any sacrifice, to take away from you, against your will, the insupportable burden of your vow, which, it is true, you may again assume after you have been turned away, but that will be your own affair. They take care not to deprive you of the faith which constitutes the strength of your vow, they take from you only the consolation of fulfilling it. They leave you the liberty of interior servitude: who can take it from you? They deprive you only of the servitude of exterior liberty: of what can you complain?

It had not been mockery if the French Revolution had said to the religious: "Mayhap there are some amongst you who have not entered of your free will into the cloisters: be it known to them that to-day the doors are opened, and that they are free to obey their conscience." Neither had it been mockery to add: "The nation takes from you the goods which your ancestors and ours bestowed upon you of old; she believes this sacrifice necessary for the safety of the country, and, leaving to you sufficient for the

sustainment of your existence, she invites you to bear the blow which falls upon you with the dignity of men who have renounced the world for the love of God and man. Now that the ancient order of things is abolished by this extraordinary and terrible act, go where you will; build for yourselves new dwellings under the protection of public justice, by the force of your virtues, and commit yourselves without fear to the long future which opens for all. Providence sends not revolutions upon earth to destroy, but to purify." This language had been an injustice without being a mockery. To deride is to pretend, in the name of liberty, to unloose bonds which are not unloosed, because they bind the interior sentiments of man, and to put forward as a sanction for this strange deliverance the spoliation of rights the most respected. When the Trappists were driven from the abbey of Melleray, did they not carry away with them their vows with their faith? And what was taken from them, save peace, country, the fruit of their labours, and the liberty which was watered with the blood of their fathers and their contemporaries?

Legitimate as a free act and as an act of faith, the religious vow is not less so as an act of devotedness. It binds him who makes it to poverty, to chastity, to obedience; that is to say, to realize upon earth, so far as depends on him, the ardent desires of the best friends of humanity, and the dreams of the boldest politicians. What does the man who loves his fellows desire, but that all his brethren may gain by their labours sufficient subsistence, that marriage bring them not misery and shame for posterity, and that a wise government procure for them peace

without making them pay for it with servitude? What is the dream of the most speculative politician, but of a universal federation, which would assure to all men the moral equality of education and of fortune, which, in order thereto, would maintain population in harmony with the fecundity of the globe, which, in fine, would give power to the most worthy by election, and obedience to the less worthy by conviction? These desires and these dreams, the possible and the improbable, are accomplished by the religious community.

By the vow of poverty, all the brethren who have subjected themselves to it become equal, whatever may have been in the world their birth and their merit. The cell of the prince is the same as that of the swineherd. And this equality is not confined to the narrow enclosure of the monastery, it extends to all humanity. As God in taking human form has made Himself the equal of all men, so the religious in taking the form of poverty has made himself the equal of all the lowly.

By the sacrifice of chastity, he renders possible in the world a marriage in place of his; he encourages those to whom their fortune permits not this seductive and onerous bond. For celibacy, like poverty, is not the creation of the monk; both existed before him, and he has only elevated them to the dignity of a virtue. The soldier, the domestic, the necessitous workman, the dowerless girl, are condemned to celibacy. But we send away our servants when they marry, and we drive away the monks because they do not marry!

What shall I say in favour of religious obedience? Does not the whole world know that

it is a passive obedience? I venture, nevertheless, to affirm the contrary, and to contend that there is but one perfectly liberal obedience in the world, namely, religious obedience. Everybody has hitherto recognized the necessity of obedience in man, but it has been sought, and with reason, to preserve obedience from baseness and injustice. Two means have been devised: one is election, the other is the law. Election is intended to confer power on the most worthy, the law to limit the prerogative of command. But, through an infirmity of human things, election is always in the hands of the lesser number, so that the minority can oppress the majority; and, on the other hand, the law being the result of the consent of the greater number, the majority can oppress the minority. This is the fatal circle wherein revolve all politics which know no other law than the human will, no other election than the choice of man. The majority, deprived of the right of election, demand unceasingly electoral reform; and the minority, who have not consented to the law, demand legislative reform; both parties asserting that they are oppressed, and both submitting to force. This is passive obedience; that is to say, *involuntary obedience to an order of which reason does not approve.* Obedience is active, liberal, glorious, only when it is an acquiescence of the intelligence and of the will, and it can only exhibit this character for all in a government where election and the law imply neither majority nor minority. It is so in religious communities, as they are generally constituted. All the religious elect directly their immediate superior, and indirectly their remote superior; and, moreover, they do not regard the

election as the result of their own will, but of the invisible influence of the Holy Spirit, who directs their hearts. The universality of the vote, and the profound conviction of divine intervention, elevate their obedience to the highest degree of honour which is possible here below. The elect commands the electors, because God and they have together willed it. But what suffices to assure the honour of obedience does not suffice to assure the justice of it. Above him who governs, and those who are governed, is a law eternal, immutable, universal, recognized by all as having for its source the divine essence itself; a law manifested from the beginning of the world, renewed and elucidated progressively by God made man, a law of love which is thus epitomized: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole mind, with thy whole soul, and thy neighbour as thyself." And again: "He who would be the first amongst you, let him be the last; and he who would be the greatest, let him be the servant of all." And, besides this supreme law which regulates all the relations of brethren with brethren, there is still another equally above all, the particular rule of the order established by its founder and its patriarchs, wherein every office and every duty is provided for in such detail that nothing is left to arbitrariness which it has been possible to remove from it.

When people speak of the passive obedience of religious, it is evident that they do not understand what they speak of. If they mean that the religious promise to obey whatever shall come into the head of their superior, it is a ridiculous misapprehension of facts: they promise to obey a superior of their choice in all that is conform-

able to the divine law and to the statutes of their order. If it is said that they obey with a perfect acquiescence of their intelligence and their will, this it is precisely which frees their obedience from the character of passivity. In no society do there exist such strong barriers against the abuse of power, and such effectual guarantees in favour of the citizens.—*Ibid.*

X

St Thomas of Aquin

TOWARDS the end of the year 1244, or at the commencement of 1245, John the Teuton, fourth master-general of the order of Friars Preachers, came to Cologne, accompanied by a young Neapolitan, whom he presented to Brother Albert as his disciple. Europe was at the time a free country, each one went where he wished for education, and all the nations joined hands in the universities. The young man whom John the Teuton placed in the school of Albert the Great was, on his father's side, grand-nephew of the Emperor Frederic I, cousin of the Emperor Henry VI, second cousin of the Emperor Frederic II then reigning; and, on his mother's side, he was descended from the Norman princes who drove the Arabs and Greeks from Italy, and conquered the two Sicilies. He was but seventeen years of age.* It was said that his relatives had taken him away and shut him up in a château to turn him from his vocation, but that they did not succeed; that a woman having been in-

* If he was fifty when he died, in 1274, he must have been twenty at this time.

troduced into his chamber, he had driven her away with a burning brand in his hand; that he had gained his two sisters to the religious life by the conversations in which they tried to dissuade him from his purpose; that Pope Innocent IV, when solicited to break the bonds which already bound him to the order of St Dominic, had heard him with admiration, and had offered to him the abbey of Monte Cassino. His arrival having been preceded by such reports, the young Count of Aquin, who was no other than Brother Thomas, was an object of curiosity to his fellow-students. But nothing in him came up to their expectations; they saw a simple young man who hardly opened his lips, and whose very eyes indicated dulness. They concluded that there was nothing distinguished about him except his birth, and his merry comrades called him the *great dumb ox of Sicily*. Albert, his master, not knowing what to think of him, took occasion at a great assembly to put to him a series of very difficult questions. The student replied with a sagacity so surprising that Albert was filled with that rare and divine joy which superior men experience when they meet with another man who is to equal or surpass them. Deeply moved he turned towards the young men who were there, and said to them: "We call Brother Thomas a dumb ox, but a day will come when the lowing of his doctrine will be heard throughout the world."

The prophecy was not long unaccomplished. Thomas of Aquin became the most celebrated doctor of the Catholic Church, and even the glory of his ancestry, royal as it was, has disappeared before the magnificence of his personal renown.

At the age of forty-one years, and having but nine more to live, St Thomas conceived the idea of the monument which was the unforeseen consummation of his destiny. He proposed to bring together into one body the scattered materials of theology, and of what could be but a compilation he made a *chef-d'œuvre* of which every one speaks, even those who read it not, as every one speaks of the Pyramids of Egypt, which very few see. This popularity, stronger than ignorance, is the final term of glory here below; God alone obtains a higher, because He alone is familiar* to all who adore Him.

Theology, as we have said, is the science of divine affirmations. When man accepts these affirmations with simplicity, he is in the state of faith; when he establishes the relation of these affirmations with one another, and with all the interior and exterior facts of the universe, his faith is in the theological or scientific state. Consequently, theology results from the mingling of a human with a divine element; and, if it is true that this union enlightens faith, it is subject, nevertheless, to a great danger. For, restricted as is our range among the things of the visible order, we attain very soon the extreme limit of the certitude which appertains to them; and if we go further, the mind brings back from those ill-explored regions opinions which sometimes affect injuriously the purity and the solidity of faith. One of the primary characteristics of the Catholic doctor is therefore the faculty of discernment in the employment of the human element.

Now, St Thomas possessed this faculty in an eminent degree. All the human science of his time was contained in the writings of Aristotle:

* À la portée.

logic, metaphysics, ethics, politics, physics, natural history. Aristotle taught all, and was regarded as having expounded in relation to them the supreme lessons of nature. Nevertheless it sufficed to peruse but a few of his works to perceive how little of the genius of Christianity was possessed by this philosopher, and already the assiduous study of him which was carried on had borne deplorable fruits. It was not extraordinary to hear masters of arts, for example, contend that a proposition was true according to the gospel, and false according to the *philosopher*. In 1277, Stephen II, Bishop of Paris, was obliged to publish a censure of 222 articles, whose error had its origin in the books of Aristotle. Such were the scientific elements with which St Thomas had to deal. It was necessary to create a psychology, an ontology, a science of ethics and of politics, worthy of being united with the dogmas of faith. St Thomas accomplished it. Laying aside the chimeras and the aberrations of the Stagyrite, he gathered from his writings whatever truth could be gleaned, elevated and transformed these materials, and, without either pulling down or adoring the idol of his age, he planned a philosophy which had still in its veins the blood of Aristotle, but purified by his own philosophy and by that of all his great predecessors in doctrine.

To the gift of discernment in the employment of the human or finite element, St Thomas united a penetrating view of the divine element. He had, when considering the mysteries of God, the steady gaze represented by the eagle of St John, the searching eye so difficult to define, but which we recognize so easily when, after meditating upon a truth of Christianity, we interrogate a

man who has gone further than we into the abyss, or heard better the sound of the infinite. It is with a great theologian as with a great artist: the one and the other see what the ordinary eye sees not; they hear what the ear of the crowd suspects not; and when, with the feeble organs at man's command, they reflect or echo what they have seen and heard, the very hind awakes and believes himself a genius. This power of discovery in the infinite astonishes those who hold that a mystery is but an affirmation whose terms even are not distinct; but those who know that the incomprehensible is nothing else but a light without a limit, so that even in the day when we shall see God face to face we will not comprehend him—those who know this are easily persuaded that the more immense is the horizon, the more the strength of sight has whereon to exercise itself. And theology has this rare advantage, that the divine affirmations, which open wide to it the infinite, are to it both a compass and a sea. The Word of God forms, in the infinite, lines which may be laid hold on, and which guide thought without restraining it, and go before while bearing it onward. Never will the man confined in the bonds and darkness of the finite have an idea of the felicity of the theologian amid the boundless expanse of truth, finding even in that which restrains him the freedom which enraptures him. This union, at one and the same time, of the most perfect security with the boldest flight, produces in the soul an indescribable satisfaction which causes him who has once experienced it to despise all else. Now, nothing has more frequently caused this experience than the reading of St Thomas. When we study a question, even in the writings

of great men, and afterwards turn to this man, we feel that we have cleared many worlds at a bound, and that thought is sluggish no longer.

I would speak of the intimate union which exists in St Thomas between the natural element and the divine element, while the former is ever subordinate to the latter. I would tell of the strict unity which, in the course of an enormous work, is never contradictory, which marshals on the right and on the left all the waters of heaven and earth, and impels them forward by a movement which comes from the source and which augments without changing it. I would give an idea of that style which makes the truth visible in the most profound depths, as we see the fishes at the bottom of limpid lakes, or the stars in the clear heaven—that style as calm as it is transparent, where imagination no more appears than passion, and which, nevertheless, leads captive the intelligence. But time presses, and, moreover, St Thomas needs no longer our praises. Sovereign pontiffs, councils, religious orders, universities, and numberless writers have so exalted him that further praise can add nothing to his fame. When the ambassadors of the kingdom of Naples came to petition for his canonization by John XXII, the Pope, who received them in full consistory, said to them: "St Thomas has enlightened the Church more than all the other doctors together, and one profits more in a year by his books than during a whole life by the books of others." And as some one, in the course of the process of canonization, remarked that he had wrought no miracles, the sovereign pontiff replied: "He has wrought as many miracles as he has written treatises." At the Council of Trent a table was

placed in the midst of the hall in which the fathers of the council were seated, and upon this table were the Holy Scriptures, the decrees of Popes, and the *Summa* of St Thomas. After that God alone can praise the great man in the eternal council of His saints.

St Thomas died at Fosse-Neuve, a monastery of the order of Cîteaux, about midway between Naples and Rome, between his country by nature and his country by grace, not far from the château of Roche-Sèche, where it is probable he was born, and near Monte Cassino, where he had passed a part of his childhood. He died there while travelling in obedience to the orders of Pope Gregory X, who had invited him to the second General Council of Lyons, at which was to be discussed the reunion of the Greek Church with the Latin. The religious assembled around his bed begged of him to give them a short exposition of the Canticle of Canticles ; and it was upon this song of divine love that he delivered his last lesson. In return he begged of them to place him upon ashes to receive the Holy Viaticum ; and when he saw the Host in the hand of the priest, he said with tears : " I firmly believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, only Son of the Eternal Father and of a virgin Mother, is in this august sacrament. I receive Thee, price of the redemption of my soul ; I receive Thee, viaticum of the pilgrimage of my soul, for the love of whom I have studied, watched and laboured, preached and taught. Never have I said aught against Thee ; but if I have said anything inadvertently, I persist not in my opinions; I submit all to the correction of the holy Roman Church, in whose obedience I depart this life." Thus died St Thomas of Aquin, at the age of

fifty years, on March 7, 1274, a few hours after midnight, in the dawn of the morning.—*Ibid*, ch. iv.

XI

Vocation

For the man of the world, life is but a space to be got over as slowly as possible, by the pleasantest road; but the Christian does not regard it in such a light. He knows that every man is the vicar of Jesus Christ, to labour by the sacrifice of himself for the redemption of humanity; and that in the plan of this great work each has a place, marked out eternally, which he is free to accept or refuse. He knows that if he voluntarily deserts this place which Providence offers to him in the ranks of useful beings, it will be transferred to a better than he, and that he himself will be abandoned to his own guidance in the wide and short way of egotism. These thoughts occupy the Christian to whom his predestination is not yet revealed; and, convinced that the surest way to ascertain it is to desire to accomplish it, whatever it may be, he keeps himself ever ready to accept the appointments of God's will. He despises none of the functions necessary for the Christian republic, because in all may be found three things on which depends their real value—the will of God which imposes them, the good which results from their faithful exercise, and the devotedness of heart to which they are confided. He even believes firmly that the less honoured are not the less high, and that the crown of the saints never comes more directly from heaven than upon a poor man's head, grown

grey in the accepted humiliation of a laborious calling. Little does it matter to him, then, where God may appoint his place; it suffices for him to know that it is His will.—*St Dominic*, ch. ii.

XII

The Rosary

THE continuance and vicissitudes of war seemed to present an almost invincible obstacle to the constant design of Dominic, which was to found a religious order consecrated to the ministry of preaching. Therefore he ceased not to ask of God the establishment of peace; and it was to obtain it, and to hasten the triumph of the faith, that he instituted, not without a secret inspiration, that method of prayer which has since been disseminated through the universal Church under the name of the rosary. When the archangel Gabriel was sent by God to the Blessed Virgin Mary to announce to her the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God in her chaste womb, he saluted her in these terms: "Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women."* These words, the most auspicious that any creature has heard, have been repeated from age to age upon the lips of Christians, and from the depths of this valley of tears they cease not to repeat to the mother of their Saviour: "Hail, Mary!" The hierarchies of heaven deputed one of their chiefs to address to the humble daughter of David this glorious salutation; and now that she is seated above the angels and all the celestial choirs, the human

* Luke i, 28.

race, of whom she is the daughter and the sister, addresses to her here below the angelical salutation: "Hail, Mary!" When she heard it for the first time from the mouth of Gabriel, she conceived immediately in her most chaste womb the Word of God; and now, every time that a human voice repeats to her these words, which were the signal of her maternity, her heart is moved by the remembrance of a moment which had none like it in heaven or on earth, and all eternity is filled with the happiness which she experiences.

Christians were indeed accustomed thus to turn their hearts to Mary, but the immemorial use of this salutation was without rule or solemnity. The faithful did not unite to address it to their beloved protectress; each one obeyed the impulse of his love. Dominic, who was not ignorant of the power of association in prayer, believed it would be useful to apply it to the angelic salutation, and that this united cry of an assembled people would ascend to heaven with an irresistible power. The very brevity of the angel's words rendered it necessary that they should be repeated a certain number of times, like those uniform acclamations poured forth by the gratitude of a nation during the progresses of their sovereigns. But repetition would engender distraction of mind. Dominic provided against this by distributing the oral salutations in many series, to each of which he attached the thought of one of the mysteries of our redemption, which was in turn for Blessed Mary a subject of joy, of sorrow, and of triumph. In this way interior meditation was united to public prayer, and the people, while saluting their Mother and their Queen, followed her in their hearts through each of the principal events of her

life. Dominic formed a confraternity, the better to assure the duration and solemnity of this mode of supplication.

His pious thought was blessed by the greatest of all successes—popular success. The Christian people attached themselves to it from age to age with incredible fidelity. The confraternities of the rosary have multiplied infinitely; there is hardly a Christian in the world who does not possess in his beads a portion of the rosary. We have all heard some evening in a country church the grave voices of the peasants reciting in two choirs the Angelical Salutation. Who has not met with processions of pilgrims passing through their fingers the beads of the rosary, and beguiling the tedium of the road by the alternative repetition of the name of Mary? When anything attains to perpetuity and universality, it must of necessity be in harmony with the wants and the destiny of man.

XIII

Man needs a Divine Teacher

WHY do I speak in this building?* If I look around me I discover faces of every age, heads which have grown grey in the vigils of science, visages which bear trace of the fatigue of battles, others which are animated by the sweet emotions of literary studies, young men, in fine, who have scarce gathered the third flower of life. You who are assembled here, tell me: What ask you of me? What do you desire from me? Truth? You have it not then in yourselves; you seek it,

* Notre-Dame.

you wish to receive it, you have come here to be taught it.

When you were children, you had a mother; it was at her knees that you received your primary education. She enlightened you at first in the order of sensations, by directing you continually in your relations with exterior objects. Moreover, by the long and laborious transmission of speech, she opened within you the source of intelligence. Then she deposited in the depths of your soul a more precious treasure, that of conscience; she punished you and recompensed you according to your actions, gave you the measure of justice and injustice, and made you a moral being. She initiated you later on into the mysteries of faith, and taught you to believe in things invisible, of which visible things are but the reflex; she made you a religious being. Thus it was that, from the dawn of your life, you were instructed in the four orders which constitute your whole being: in the order of sensations, of ideas, of conscience, and of faith.

When man has passed the age of primary instruction, he thenceforth takes his place in one of two classes of which humanity is composed—the lettered and the unlettered. The unlettered form what are called the people, and the people, absorbed by their poverty and incessant labour, remain always incapable of improving on their primary education by their personal studies and their own reflections. They cannot analyse their sensations, their ideas, their conscience, their faith. They cannot emancipate themselves from the teaching which has been imparted to them save by accepting a new teaching, of which perhaps they will deem themselves judges, but of which they will in reality be only the servants

Moreover, when Jesus Christ, the liberator of intelligences, came into the world, He said of the mission His Father had confided to Him: "To preach the gospel to the poor He hath sent Me."*

Wherefore the poor? Doubtless because they are the greater number; and all souls being equal before God when He weighs them in the balance of eternal justice, the souls of the people must preponderate; but also, and still more, because the people, in their inability to study and to learn, need a master who will put them in possession of truth by teaching them without expense and without peril.

If such is the case with the people—that is to say, with almost the entire human race—is there not at least an exception in regard of those whom we have called the lettered? May they not break with the teaching that has made them what they are, and reconstruct, by their own force, an intelligence which will come from themselves? Such is, it is true, their pretension. You remember when the epoch arrived at which you went forth from your family to enter society, it seemed to you that there awakened in you a new power which you called reason. You began to adore this power; and, kneeling before it, you said: "Behold, my only master and my only king! Reason will henceforth teach me whether there exist sensations, ideas, a conscience—things which are unseen and which sustain this world which we see." You said this; but it was in vain. You could not divest yourself of the primitive man; your reason was a gift of your education; you were the sons of instruction, the sons of prejudice, the sons of man; you are so still. The lettered class is, in fact, divided into

* Luke iv, 18.

two classes—one consisting of men who are free to make what use they please of their time, and who may be called men of leisure; the other, of those who are forced to labour by the necessity of their position. The latter are incomparably the more numerous. The division of property renders it necessary for each one to labour in order to preserve the social position which his ancestors have transmitted to him, and, in such a servitude, he cannot occupy himself actively with the great questions which agitate humanity and devote himself to theological studies, which alone would suffice to absorb an entire existence. This class are therefore almost as powerless as the people; they are, with pride superadded, amongst the poor of the intelligence whom Christ came to evangelize. For we must avoid taking the words of the gospel in too material or narrow a sense. The primary indigence is the indigence of truth, as the primary wealth is the wealth of the soul in truth. And when man has come to know his real good, when he is rich in the possession of truth, he would not exchange the lot which it has brought to him for all the fortune of kings.

But such being the case, who are they that remain floating proudly on the surface of humanity, and capable of using their reason in order to reconstruct it? Some privileged men who have received from heaven genius, which is a rare thing; fortune, a thing less rare but which nevertheless is also rare; and, finally, an innate aptitude for sustained labour. Genius, fortune, labour, these are the three things necessary in order to become a man of superior intelligence. Such a man may reject the ideas received through instruction, like the eagle which takes

its young one in its talons, and if it see that it cannot gaze upon the sun, drops it to earth as a worthless burden. But even this man has a difficult task, and captivity weighs heavily upon him. Not each man only has to submit to instruction: nations and ages have to do likewise. After having shaken off his nurse and his masters, there remains another task for the man of genius, namely, to shake off his nation and his time.

Can he do this? Do we see it done? Look around you; what man, be he ever so great, bears not upon his brow the mark of his time? I ask all of you, whosoever you may be, would you be what you are if you were born six hundred years ago? Six hundred years ago you would have brought stones for the foundations of this very cathedral to which you come to hear the divine word with proud and critical hearts. But even within this century, if you were born in any other part of the globe that I might name, would you be what you are? Why is France Catholic, Prussia Protestant, Asia Mussulman? Whence comes this enormous difference between peoples so near one another? A different word has prevailed amongst them, a different teaching has produced different souls, beliefs, manners. Yes, the nations and the ages accept the yoke of authority, and impose it in their turn; they inherit anterior prejudices and passions, modify them by prejudices and passions born of them, and this mobility of times, which appears to accuse the independence of man, is but the effect of a submission to tyrannies which beget one another. Tyrants change, tyranny changes not. And, strange to say, we glory in being of our age; that is to say, we submit through convic-

tion to the prejudices of the times in which we live.

As for us, Christians, liberated by the Church, we are neither of the present age nor of the age to come; we are of eternity. We do not wish to submit to the teaching of an age, or a nation, or a man; for these teachings are false, because they are variable and contradictory. Save, in fact, a certain number of phenomena confirmed by experience, save some axioms which are the foundation of human reason, and the distinction between justice and injustice, what is there on which human teaching is in accord? What is there that is not corrupted by this teaching? I visit the places where man teaches man, and I am dismayed: where shall we find a mouth which contradicts not another, and convicts it not of error? I name London, Paris, Berlin, Constantinople, Pekin, celebrated cities which govern the world and instruct it: is there one which has not its opinions, its systems, its customs, its laws, its doctors of a day? Let us confine ourselves to this capital; * it is, we are told, the centre of human civilization; it may be so, but count the doctrines which, during eighty years, have been current here, and which have spread hence over Europe. Idolatry had gods without number and an unique Pantheon raised to their glory; but who will number human opinions and build a Pantheon vast enough to give them all an altar and a tomb? And, nevertheless, man is a being who is taught; he is of necessity subject to the ideas which surge around his cradle. If man were not a being who is taught, he would communicate directly with truth, and his errors would be purely voluntary.

* Paris.

and individual; but he is taught, and childhood cannot defend itself against the teaching of error, and the people cannot defend themselves against the teaching of error, and the greater part of the lettered cannot defend themselves against the error which they have imbibed in childhood, nor against the ascendancy of some superior intelligences which dominate others. Such is the condition of humanity, a condition of oppression which evidences either an irremediable degradation or the necessity for a divine teaching which would protect childhood, the people, the ordinary classes of the lettered, and even those whom a greater intelligence subjects to the private domination of their pride, and frees not from the public domination of their age and nation.

Yes, truth is but a name; man is but the miserable sport of opinions which succeed one another without end: either this, or there must be upon the earth a divine authority which teaches man, that being necessarily taught, and necessarily deceived by the teaching of man. The pagans themselves felt the want of it; Plato said that "it was necessary that a master should come from heaven to instruct humanity," thus anticipating what St Paul said in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and other some, evangelists; and other some, pastors and doctors. . . . That henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive."* —*1st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

* Eph. iv, 11-14.

XIV

How are we to find such a Teacher?

By a sign, to name but one, by a sign as conspicuous as the sun, which no false authority possesses—the sign of universality, of catholicity. If there be a remarkable thing in this world it is assuredly this, that no human authority has attained to catholicity—that is to say, has succeeded in passing the bounds of a certain class of men or a nationality. Human authorities are of three kinds: philosophical authorities, non-Christian religions, Christian sects. As to philosophical authorities, never have they reached the people, and never have they united the cultivated classes in one school; but, infinitely divided, they have offered to the world, in all time, a spectacle wherein esteem has been over-borne by pity. Where to-day in the universe is philosophical authority paramount? The non-Christian religions have never been other than national, and that which has most nearly approached Christianity, which might even to a certain point be considered as a Christian sect, Mahometanism, has aspired to universality only in hoping to subject the universe to the Caliphat by force of arms. When the Mussulman empire was divided, there were as many sects as kingdoms; as witness Turkey and Persia, the adorers of Ali and those of Omar. Where is there in the world to-day a non-Christian religion which exhibits a universal teaching? The same phenomenon is reproduced amongst the Christian sects, and we have an

illustrious example in the two great existing schisms, the Greek schism and the Protestant schism. The Greeks were submissive to the patriarch of Constantinople so long as Constantinople remained the sole centre of the East; when the Russian empire was formed, the Russian Greeks formed a Church apart, and broke the remaining bonds which, in the infancy of their empire, still attached them to the primitive seat of schism. As to the Protestant churches, they have been divided into as many fractions as there are kingdoms: the Episcopal Church of England, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Calvinist Church of Holland, the Evangelical Church of Prussia; and the Protestants, whom a kingdom has not brought together in national unity, such as those of the United States, have formed thousands of sects which can no longer be named, they have so many names.

The true Church, she who from the beginning has taken the title of Catholic, which no one during eighteen centuries has dared even once to dispute with her, the true Church, divinely instituted to teach the human race, has alone constituted a universal authority, notwithstanding the tremendous difficulty of the thing. The whole Roman empire was leagued against this immense authority, which spread everywhere, and, despite the persecution, the Catholic Church, from the earliest times, passed the limits of the Roman empire; she penetrated into Persia, into Ethiopia, into India, into Scythia. After she had subjugated the Roman empire and passed beyond it, the barbarians came to destroy the temporal unity founded by pagan Rome; and the Catholic Church, while all the nations underwent change and division, extended her unity and her

universality into every land where force scattered the members of the ancient society; and, moreover, she sought out the barbarians even in their forests to lead them to the foot of the same altar and the same chair. New worlds were discovered: the Church was there as soon as the conquerors. The Indias of the west and of the east were brought to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and the sun set no longer on the kingdom of truth. Protestantism, in striving to break Catholic unity and universality, has succeeded only in proving again, by the spectacle of its divisions, that it is impossible for men to found, by human power, an universal Church.

To effect it, there must be overcome the jealousy of the temporal authority, the diversity of languages, manners, prejudices, the enmities of nations, and, finally and above all, the independence of minds—that independence which is merely submission to false authorities, but to authorities which flatter pride and have the appearance of being sustained by individual reason. Never will error overcome these divers obstacles, because error, being at one and the same time pride of the understanding and logical contradiction, can unite neither minds nor wills. The unity alone of the Church, a unity unparalleled in the world, is an undeniable proof of her divinity: the Church is Catholic, therefore she is true.

But what is well worthy of remark is this, that the Catholicity of the Church embraces not only the different nations of the globe; it embraces also in the same spiritual bonds childhood, the populace, the cultivated classes, the strong and the feeble. All, without distinction, have the same symbols and the same faith;

whereas philosophy includes only educated men, and the pagan religions include only the populace. Protestantism itself has failed to avoid this radical vice; for it is one thing for the populace and another for enlightened men. It commands the populace with authority, it leaves the educated free. The populace believe in their minister, the educated believe in the Bible and themselves.* In this regard the Catholic Church is still truly divine; she not alone gives protection to the feeble, she renders it equally to the strong.

You will say perhaps: But if a teaching Church is necessary for the human race, why was it established so late? Why has it existed eighteen hundred years and not six thousand years? I answer: Everything must bear the impress of the original fall—nature, the body, the soul, society, truth itself, in order that man may feel profoundly the need of reparation. Nevertheless, God did not abandon men in the times anterior to the constitution of the Church; He communicated to them the truth by Adam, by Henoch, by Noe, by Abraham, by Moses, by a continuous line of prophets and of revelations. The Church herself, or the society of men with God, existed from the beginning, but it did not exist with the organization and the power which it has received from Jesus Christ. He did not say that He would establish it, but that He would establish it *upon the rock;* upon a rock destined to break those who shall fall upon it and those upon whom it shall fall.†

* The belief of educated Protestants in the Bible has undergone an eclipse in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Mallock, in "Is Life worth Living?" says of it: "Now all this is changed. The great Protestant axiom is received no longer."

† Matt. xxi, 44.

Jesus Christ has completed the Church as He has completed everything; but, before the consummation, man was not abandoned, he was prepared and sustained. His condition was not equal to our present condition, but it was sufficient and just if he had willed to profit by it. He perished by his own fault, not by the fault of God.—*Ibid.*

XV

The Infallibility of the Church

Do not regard the infallibility of the Church as a strange and incomprehensible privilege. It is, on the contrary, that which is most simple and most necessary for men, namely, the re-establishment of their relations with truth. There is nothing strange in the fact that truth is communicated by God to the human race by means of a teaching free from error; what is strange is that this teaching should be despised, notwithstanding our need of it; and the disorder introduced by original sin can alone explain this anomaly. Remember that the Church does not create truth; truth is in God; it is in the word which God has spoken to men; and the sole privilege of the Church is to teach that word without the power of transforming it into error. How can she teach the human race, how can she demand its faith without the possession of this privilege? Moreover, every religion which does not proclaim itself infallible convicts itself of error by that fact alone; for it admits that it may deceive, which is the highest degree both of dishonour and absurdity in an authority teaching in the name of God. It admits that it is but a

philosophy, and will consequently meet with the fate of a philosophy. You have recently had a proof of this; you have seen men pose before humanity as founders of a religion: many of them were men of talent, of enthusiasm, and of honesty. What was the end? They failed because they lacked a divine mission and a promise of infallibility. In a body, with their chief at their head, they dared not present themselves before you and say: "Hear and believe, for we are infallible!" And therefore it was that reasoning crushed them. For that which causes all to perish nowadays, and makes the world strain its anchors, is reasoning; it is because man believes man no longer, and, nevertheless, will not submit himself to God. Without a divine authority there is nothing stable, nothing strong; but all is like the wind which passes away while it destroys.

If society is shaken from one end of Europe to the other, what think you agitates it to its foundations? It is not the sword which overthrows princes. The sword is met by the sword; force resists force; when the powers of earth have but to struggle against force, they crush with their armies those who oppose them. But the terrible enemy, that which overthrows everything, and against which neither republic nor king can do aught, is reasoning: reasoning which has no longer the counterpoise of authority and infallibility. And yet, notwithstanding this necessity for infallibility, the Catholic Church alone has dared to call itself infallible. The pagan religions, far from pretending to it, did not even dare to teach a doctrine to their followers; the Mahometan religion contents itself with causing the Koran

to be read by its disciples; the Protestants reject infallibility absolutely, and in teaching the people contradict their principles continually. To teach nothing, or to cause to be read a book reputed divine, these are the only resources of religions which do not proclaim themselves infallible. And if you ask why they do not proclaim themselves infallible, it is because they cannot do so; it is because they know well that their perpetual variations, or the absurdity of their dogmas, would ever betray such a pretension. It is not so easy as we may think to proclaim oneself infallible. Every false religion commences in man; and what man is bold enough to proclaim as infallible his thoughts and those of his successors? How could Luther, for example, proclaim himself infallible, he who attacked the infallibility of every Church? The man who wishes to found a new religion, that is to say, to corrupt an ancient religion—for no one but God has founded a religion upon earth—the man who entertains this design has at once to face the necessity and the impossibility of proclaiming himself infallible. If he do not proclaim himself and his successors infallible, he will not obtain the faith of his own sectaries; he will perish by reasoning, which will introduce into his doctrine infinite variations. If he proclaim himself infallible, he will be the laughing-stock of the universe. Therefore it is that inventors of false dogma conceal themselves within temples, bury their doctrine in mystery and under symbolical forms; or, on the other hand, reason like the heretics, and build, on that moving sand, ephemeral churches and fugitive dogmas. The Catholic Church, in proclaiming herself infallible, has

done then what is indeed absolutely necessary, but what is beyond the power of man. And this infallibility has really manifested itself in her by an indestructible constancy in her dogmas and her morality, despite the difference of times, of places, and of men.

Why do you not laugh when I tell you that I am infallible—not I, but the Church, of which I am a member, and which has given me a mission? Why, I say, do you not laugh? It is because the history of the Church gives her some right, even in your eyes, to say that she is infallible; it is because, in a career of eighteen centuries amid all the mutations of the human mind, she has been firm as a pyramid. You would indeed make this an occasion of insult; you say: It is but a tomb, and there is in it but a little ashes. Yes, but this tomb is that of Christ; these ashes are ashes which live long and are always the same, and despite of you make you think.

It is, you will say, the very principle of infallibility which has produced this result. But in vain will any organization claim infallibility if it do not possess it, as nothing can resist the variations and contradictions produced by the diversity of minds. How does it happen that Gregory XVI and the bishops of his time, although living under influences so novel, have the same thoughts as all their predecessors? It may be natural that the people should believe the same as the chiefs of doctrine, because they regard them as infallible; but the chiefs themselves, if not guided by a superior, immutable, infinite mind, how could they preserve unity of doctrine? Let us acknowledge, in this accord of facts with principles, the divine character which alone can explain it. There must needs be in

the world a teaching authority; this teaching authority must possess the highest evidences of certitude or moral authority, and, moreover, it must be infallible, that it may command the faith of those whom it teaches, and who cannot be judges of doctrine. But the Church Catholic alone teaches the whole human race, or at least bears the character of catholicity; she alone possesses all the evidences of moral certitude in their highest degree; she alone has dared to say that she is infallible, and the history of her doctrine proves, by its admirable and incomprehensible unity, that she has received the precious gift whereby the primitive union of men with truth has been re-established. Everywhere else we find but local, variable, and contradictory ideas, waves succeeding waves, whilst the Catholic Church resembles the ocean, which surrounds and bathes every continent.—*3rd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XVI

Reasoning

REASONING is a faculty of man, an admirable instrument given to finite beings, who not being able, like God, to apprehend the truth at a single glance, must needs discover it and explore it as in a mine, where each vein leads on to another. But the defect of reasoning is that at a certain depth it loses its lucidity, and that the chain of deduction in these advanced regions may no longer be followed save by well-trained minds. But, as we have seen, the number of these subtle and sure minds is very limited; the masses of men are bad logicians, and easily le

astray by the resemblance which sophism bears to the severe reality of reasoning. Every one understands tradition, which is but a fact; every one understands conscience, which is only a cry; but reasoning employs a thousand artifices in the labyrinth of the mind, and it needed all the sagacity of an Aristotle, one of the most penetrating thinkers that ever existed, to disentangle, in bulky volumes, its folds and windings. This was then the veritable sceptre of error, and what the corruption of tradition and of conscience could not effect against the human race, reasoning was called upon to accomplish. In effect, whilst tradition, degraded, had left everywhere traces of truth, whilst conscience, enslaved by voluptuousness, had everywhere and continuously sent forth sighs, reasoning alone has had the glory of razing to the very foundations the sacred temple of the true and good. It has been the father of atheism, the author of total blasphemy; it has given nothingness to some souls who have rejoiced in it. Nevertheless God, who must be in all things master, had prepared a defence against this terrible enemy, and this defence was anarchy produced by reasoning in its own dominion. Men saw all those illustrious thinkers, those rare geniuses who were endowed with the finest gifts of the intelligence, powerless to found a durable school, and succeeding one another like the waves which break on the shore, and which overwhelm one another by their mere movement. Humanity discovered that there was here for it neither science, nor security, nor peace; not even a hut in which to sleep for a night, not even a dream wherein to forget oneself. Rationalism, the fatal amusement of some distinguished minds, the source of

ruins the most complete, ever went its way suffi ciently removed from humanity to leave it in possession of conscience and tradition—con science in its interior, tradition in its sanctuaries —*5th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XVII

The Conditions of Salvation

GOD has constantly provided for the instructio of the world, before as well as after Jesus Christ— not always in the same degree, it is true, bu always sufficiently to render salvation possibl to men of good will. I will make this plai by stating briefly the conditions necessary fo salvation.

These conditions are three in number: w must practise the truth so far as we know it we must embrace and practise the truth superio to that in which we were born, as soon as it i possible to know it; we must die loving Go above all things.

We must first practise the truth so far as w know it; for he who does not practise the trut which he knows, hates and despises God, who truth itself: he is judged by his own conscienc He, on the contrary, who adheres in mind, i heart, and in action, to all the truth which h knows, is safe and secure before God, accordin to the express doctrine of St Paul: "Glory an honour and peace to every one that worket good, to the Jew first and also the Greek. F there is no respect of persons with God. . . For not the hearers of the law are just befo God; but the doers of the law shall be justifie

For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature those things that are of the law; these having not the law, are a law to themselves: who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them, and their thoughts between themselves accusing, or also defending one another: in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." *

In the second place, we must embrace and practise the truth superior to that in which we were born, as soon as it is possible to know it. He who repels the superior truth which he may know is culpable like him who does not practise the inferior truth in which he was born. He hates the truth profoundly, because the truth better known demands of him greater sacrifices. You will say perhaps that it is difficult to pass from the inferior truth to tbe superior truth. But whence comes this difficulty if not from ourselves, because we do not practise the truth so far as we know it? What! you desire that God enlighten you more, and you do not accomplish even the duties imposed upon you by a lesser light! You ask for a mountain, and you cannot bear a grain of sand! Listen to the divine oracle: "He that doth truth, cometh to the light," † that is to say, he who is conformed to the light which he knows, attains to the light which he does not yet know. And moreover: "This is the judgment: because the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reproved." ‡ Whosoever you may be in this

* Romans, ii. † John iii, 21. ‡ John iii, 19, 20.

assembly, whether you have first seen the day amongst Polytheists, Jews, Mahometans, Protestants, or Catholics, the light of God has shone upon you more or less: do you follow that light? Do you act as tradition and conscience demand of you? If you do not so act, to what purpose should God enlighten you more? He would but increase your crime."

The third condition for being saved is to die loving God above all things; for such is the end of Christianity. "The end of the commandment is charity from a pure heart."* "Every one that loveth is born of God."† It is in order to love God that we must know Him; it is to make us love Him that He has sent His only Son whosoever loves Him is saved. But one of two things will come to pass: either the man who dies has attained sufficiently the light, that is to say Christianity, to have had, during his life, all the means of loving God as He ought to be loved; or, on the other hand, after having known and practised the truth so far as he could, he has not attained sufficiently the light, so as to possess the means of loving God adequately. In the first case the man is saved by the ordinary ways of Providence; in the second case he may receive at the hour of death what has been wanting to him without his fault, and he is saved by the extraordinary ways of Providence, by that infusion of grace and love which the Church calls the *baptism of fire*. But we must remember that no one is saved by extraordinary ways unless the ordinary ways have failed him; and therefore it is that every man is bound to embrace the truth which is superior to that which he

* 1 Timothy i, 5. † 1 John, iv, 7.

has at first known, because it is this superior truth which ought naturally to conduct him to the love which saves.—*Ibid.*

XVIII

Coercion of Heretics

THE power of binding and of loosing, maintained within purely spiritual limits, without the aid of any civil force, is a thing quite simple, and speaks for itself. But has the Church used material coaction to compel the observance of her laws? Has she not called the civil power to the aid of the spiritual power? That is the difficulty. How can the Church be said to be founded upon grace and persuasion if blood-stained scaffolds have been set up in her defence? I have no objection to consider this subject, and I hope to do so frankly, without straining history for the Gospel or the Gospel for history.

It is certain that the Church has no right to use the material sword. Jesus Christ rebuked His disciples sharply one day when they desired that fire should descend from heaven upon a city which had rejected them, and He said to them reproachfully: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save."* This spirit has been perpetual in the Church, not only while she was persecuted, but even in the times of her triumph. I will not cite for you the words of Tertullian, of Origen, of St Cyprian, of Lactantius, of St Athanasius, of St Hilary of Poitiers, of St John

* Luke ix, 55, 56.

Chrysostom. One remarkable fact will be sufficient. When at the end of the fourth century two Spanish bishops denounced the Priscillianists to the magistrates, and were the cause of many people being consigned to death, Pope Siricius, who then governed the universal Church, condemned these bishops, St Ambrose cut them off from his communion, and St Martin repented all his life of having but once held communication with them; finally, they were condemned in 390 at a Council of Milan, and in 401 at a Council of Turin. Two centuries after, St Gregory the Great wrote to a patriarch of Constantinople regarding some heretics who had been maltreated in a sedition: "It is a new and unheard-of teaching to advocate the exaction of faith by punishment!" A Council of Toledo, held in 633, ordained that no one should be forced to profess the faith, which ought to be embraced voluntarily and through persuasion; and this canon has been made part of the canon law.

It is then certain that the Church, as a Church, does not possess the right to use the material sword, that she is founded on persuasion, that faith is not to be brought about by violence. Nevertheless, may not the civil authority, which has the power of the sword, employ rigour, not to bring about faith, which is a fruit of grace and persuasion, but to defend the Church against the attacks of her enemies, and to prevent external manifestations against the faith? This is a new point of view from which we must examine the question that occupies us.

In all the ancient systems religion was regarded as a fundamental law of the State, and whoever outraged religion was punished as a

violator of the most sacred laws of the country. But had civil society a right to make religion a fundamental law of the State? I do not see how it is possible to doubt it; for civil society is free to establish all laws which are not unjust; and it does not appear to be unjust to prevent all external acts against the religion practised unanimously in a country. The greatest legislators of antiquity have thought so; and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the last chapter of the "Social Contract," has formally established that it was the right of civil society. When Christianity spread throughout the world after Jesus Christ it met with this doctrine, which was partly the cause of the long persecution which the Church had to endure. The Church, protected by God, surmounted this obstacle. The bonds, renewed later on in all their force, and which united religion with the State, were broken by the dissolution of the Roman Empire and the confusion of the barbarian kingdoms. But in the end Christianity became the unanimous religion of Europe; and the ancient unity, which constituted religion the fundamental law of the State, was re-established. All overt acts against Christianity were regarded as acts of revolt against the laws. But we must bear in mind that this was a political institution, and not an institution of divine ordinance. Society, which had established this rule, judged it useful for the good order of the empire; but the Church could not establish it in virtue of her personal right. I do not examine just now the merit of this political institution; I say only that it was a political institution, and that, at least, it was founded upon the example of all the peoples and all the legislators of antiquity. You have still,

at the present day, remains of this, even in the Protestant States. For example, the observance of the Sunday forms part of the laws of the State in England and in the United States, and this law is maintained, by unanimous consent, with a rigour which we would be tempted to accuse, but which is the result of the free-will of the citizens. No one is compelled to believe that the rest of the seventh day was instituted by God, but everybody is compelled to respect the external observance of it. Such, then, in the Middle Ages, was the law of European society. This law has been abrogated by the will of those who made it; religion is no longer the fundamental law of the State; but, I repeat it, the State had the right to make this law, to impose it and to compel its observance.

That is all very good, you will say to me; but the Church connived at it; the Church consented to it; the Church co-operated in it; she accepted the benefice of blood; she joined the spiritual sword with the temporal sword; and formed, over the heads of the peoples, a vault impenetrable to the air of liberty. Yes. In my soul and conscience I believe the Church was willing to be associated with the State, to constitute, by their joint action, an empire wherein the distinction of powers would result only in more perfect harmony and more profound unity. I believe this, and I say it; but with equal frankness I will state the reasons for it.

Truth is accused of being intolerant, and tolerance is regarded as an appanage of error. No prejudice is more widespread, none more opposed to history and facts. If there is a historical dogma, it is that error is a persecutor, implacable and atrocious, and is such always

when it can, and as far as it can. Error is Antiochus; truth, the Maccabees. "All who will live piously in Christ Jesus," said St Paul, "shall suffer persecution." * And Jesus Christ, the great holocaust of truth, the victim *par excellence* of error, said Himself to the Jews: "Behold, I send to you prophets and wise men and scribes: and some of them you will put to death and crucify; and some you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the just blood that hath been shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the Just even unto the blood of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom you killed between the temple and the altar." † This prophecy was not long unaccomplished, not only in Judea, but throughout the entire extent of the universe. Who persecuted during the three first centuries of the Christian era? Was it the Catholics, or their enemies? Who persecuted under the emperors of the east? Was it not the Arians, the Donatists, the iconoclasts? and you know with what fervour and perseverance. The Church, up to the time of Charlemagne, had ceaselessly to defend herself against assassinations, torturings, incendiarisms, prisons, exiles; and she suffered all these things at the hands of error. We should read in St Augustine of the atrocities committed in Africa by the Donatists, how they organized themselves as bands of assassins and incendiaries, mutilating, tearing out the eyes and filling the sockets with vinegar or quicklime; and, nevertheless, St Augustine ceased not to implore the courts and the tribunes of Africa not to punish their crimes with the extreme penalty of death, because these

* 2 Tim. iii, 12. † Matt. xxiii, 34, 35.

crimes had been committed through hatred of the Church. The sixteenth century, with the resurrection of error, saw all these bloody tragedies renewed; it saw the Protestants break our images, wreck our churches, tear down our shrines, scatter to the winds and the waves the remains of our fathers, slaughter our priests and religious, and invent for us, in free England, punishments the description of which is in itself alone a cruel punishment. And to-day, when the ideas of toleration appear to be so widely spread, who are they that persecute in Europe, who imprison, who banish, who send into Siberia, who bring about conversions by chicanery and by the scourge? Is it the Church? Ah, the whole world knows it! Look around you; in the smallest villages you will see the Church the butt of a harassing minority, who cut off as far as they can her temporal supplies, arm themselves against her with calumny, and make no distinction between justice and injustice when there is question of her rights. The combat between error and truth is always that of Cain and Abel; Cain is ever saying to his brother: Come, let us go down together into the field of liberty —but it is only to murder him basely.

We must not be astonished at this, for what can we expect from error? It has with it neither reason nor the heart; not history, order, or logic; it encounters at every step invincible monuments, irresistible arguments, transfigurations of the soul, which take from it its followers: again I ask: what can we expect from it? It can but become enraged, and pass from madness to homicide. The blood which was upon Cain—such is its mark. They try to disguise it in these days; but a time will come when its purple stain

shall no longer be wiped out or concealed. As for us, it is true that, weary of the oppression of ten centuries, we have gratefully accepted the union proposed to us by good men; we believed that unity was beneficial for everybody, as well as for us. The result has been that blood was shed for our cause, not in order to conversion, but for reprisal and defence. We may regret it, for the exercise even of a right is sometimes regrettable, but the fact remains that our nature, the nature of truth, is pacific, patient, full of tolerance and equity; but that, after having suffered martyrdom twenty times, it has not been forbidden it to constitute a kingdom wherein the temporal sword defended it against the temporal sword. Our garment is pure, it is white, it is the garment of truth.

Truth and error contend for the empire of the world. The arms of truth are persuasion; the arms of error are force. By his intelligence man inclines to truth; by his body he inclines to error, which is favourable to the passions. Truth tends then to prevail by the intelligence, and error by corporal force. If civil society defend truth, that is to say, prevent violence troubling it in its efforts to persuade, it is its duty; if it desire to go further, and constitute truth the fundamental law of the State, it is its right. We must observe the difference between the two cases: when civil society protects truth or the Church against violence, it accomplishes a duty; when it makes truth the fundamental law, it exercises a right which belongs to every society to constitute itself freely beneath the yoke of certain laws. And truly, if there be an idea great, vigorous, worthy of man, it is to take truth as the fundamental law. Were it but

an Utopia, it would be a beautiful Utopia. But human passions, which respected this state of things in antiquity, because then religion was erroneous, have attacked it with energy in modern times, because religion was all pure, all holy, all true. The passions have been victorious; civil society, profoundly divided, rests to-day upon an absolutely contrary principle, namely, full and entire liberty of creed. May at least this liberty not be a vain word, and the Church even now obtain from error the peaceable and full exercise of her spiritual rights, that is to say, the right to persuade the human race! It is our dearest hope and our most cherished desire.—*7th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XIX

The Priest

THE priest! Have you ever considered the difficulty of conceiving what is a priest? Have you ever explained to yourself, not how there have always been priests, and how there is still so great a number, but how there is even one? He who can meditate upon the priest, and not be struck by his existence, I pity that man! What, then, is a priest? Is he a man who promotes morality—an officer of morality, as the eighteenth century said? But, external to Christianity, where is the morality of the priest? What was the morality of the pontiffs of Greece and Rome? The priest, is he a philosopher? But philosophy combats the priest. Is he a public functionary of any kind? But if all the sovereigns of Europe and of the world combined to make a priest, they would only end by bringing on a man ridicule and disgrace. There are in this capital states

men, men of genius, poets, orators, artists: I pray them to confer together in order to make a priest. They will see! One day, in the time of the French Republic, one of the government chiefs presented himself in a temple, clothed in a white robe with a blue girdle, and holding in his hand a vase of flowers, which he offered to the Supreme Being, the founder of the Republic. In itself this act was simple and reasonable: why should not a magistrate habited in solemn garments offer to God one of the purest and most lovely things in creation, a bouquet of flowers? He fell, nevertheless, beneath the feet of the most signal ridicule. He had performed the act of a priest, without having received the sacerdotal transfiguration, without having been elevated to the incomprehensible dignity of a priest. The priest, the man who exists neither by morality, nor by philosophy, nor by the State, nor by the world! The man impossible to create, and who, nevertheless, exists always and everywhere! What is he, in fine? The priest is a man anointed by tradition to shed blood, not as the soldier, through courage, not as the magistrate, through justice, but as Jesus Christ, through love. The priest is a man of sacrifice; by it, each day, reconciling heaven and earth, and by it, each day, announcing to every soul the primordial truths of life, of death, and of resurrection. Behold why, you, children of the eighteenth century, when, a few minutes ago, sacerdotal hands elevated the sacred Host—you, nourished with the proud thoughts of your age, were seized with involuntary awe, and inclined your heads through an instinct for which I hope God will account with you.—*9th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XX

First Principles

If you desire to consider the logical order, which is the foundation of all knowledge, you must ascend to first principles, to axioms which you admit are indemonstrable, thus resting propositions which are self-demonstrative upon propositions which are not self-demonstrative and building the edifice of reason upon foundations which have none themselves, and which you proudly call by the name of axioms. You say, it is true, that these axioms are so evident that they need not proofs, and that it is impossible to go beyond them. But truth has no Columns of Hercules. Upon the dial of truth the needle traverses a certain space; it moves from noon to six o'clock, for example; then seeing the darkness coming on, you say: "It can go no further." You are deceived; truth passes beyond. Afterwards the needle retraces its steps—it returns to noon—and you say again: "Here there is so much light that it need not pass beyond." You are deceived a second time, truth progresses ever. For truth calls forth truth; and if it were permitted to us to see the infinite light, we would see that light leads to light, evidence to evidence, and that the infinite encounters, salutes, embraces the infinite. Science, arrived at a point where its powerlessness arrests it, cries to you, "Halt!" But truth never calls upon you to stop at any point. Truth is like a river. It descends to the ocean and the vapours which arise from the ocean re

turn to its source to feed it; so that, whether at the source or at the mouth, it is ever the ocean which we find. And seated in our little intellectual ship we ascend the course of the river, and we descend it; but, on one side, we encounter, like impassable cataracts, those axioms which prevent us from ascending higher towards the sources of truth; on the other side, we discover the ocean of the infinite, across which we dare not follow the consequences of truth. Everywhere and always, at the commencement and at the end, the light which illumines the shade, the shade which obscures the light, the road and the bourne, science and faith.

I have now arrived at the region of logic which dominates everything, which is applicable to everything, which tests everything. In the axioms, which are the foundation of human reason, I have indicated to you an obscure element, and consequently an element of faith; not that axioms may not be final evidence, but this evidence does not prevent me seeking something beyond them—the substantial axiom in place of the logical axiom, the eternal light in place of communicated light, truth itself in place of truth received by a mind which may lose it by accident, by folly. You may thus see that the natural world is allied to a superior world, to a divine world, natural science to a divine science, natural faith to divine faith, and that the axiom is precisely the point of meeting and of junction of these two orders to which we belong, and which we have neither the right nor the power to separate if we would be consistent.

When I said to you, in a preceding conference, that you are mystics in spite of yourselves,

I saw some amongst you smile, thinking perhaps that it was a witticism. Now you will be less prompt to accuse me of exaggeration; for you have proof that faith is a needful and universal element of the human understanding, to whatever object it applies its faculties, and that it is only necessary not to confound the faith which relates to the things of the inferior world with the faith which relates to the things of the superior or divine world. You believe in matter, you believe in life, you believe in the soul, you believe in the word of an honest man, you believe in axioms; and at the same time you have the science of matter, the science of life, the science of morality, the logical science: you believe and you know regarding the same object, and every moment you express this double situation of your intelligence by the incessant repetition of these two words: I believe, I know. Faith and science are bound together in your soul as phenomena and substance are bound together in beings; and if you desire by main force to escape from faith—from that faith like to an eagle, whose talons would hold you suspended by the hair over an abyss—you will have no other resource than to deny substance and to hang on to the superficies of things. But who will assure you that beyond this superficies there is not a concealed support? You deny without having seen; it is therefore by faith that you deliver yourself from faith. And if you seek refuge in doubt, what becomes of your science? It is but the dream of a shadow, as Pindar says; something like those Elysian fields of paganism, which had neither breadth nor depth nor real light, fields peopled with phantoms whose very happiness was a phantom.

Let us consider the difficulty which you have in store for me.

Whence comes it that natural faith, that which, behind each natural phenomenon, perceives a natural substance—whence comes it that it is so easy, and that religious faith, that which perceives a divine substance behind divine phenomena, is on the contrary so difficult? Seeing the phenomena of matter, those of life, those of thought, we have no difficulty in believing in the substance which is their support; whence comes it that in presence of the phenomena of the religious world we have so much difficulty in believing in the invisible substance of which they are the revelation?

I might at the outset deny that natural faith is so easy of acquisition. For, apart from sensible phenomena, upon what has doubt not exercised itself? What has philosophy been from its origin but a school of contradictory opinions, which have always, more or less, ended by engendering scepticism? Have we not doubted the existence of matter and that of the soul, as well as the existence of God and the divinity of Jesus Christ? Have we not doubted mathematics and the first principles of reason? The celebrated physician Barthèz was dying. A priest, who was privileged to approach him, went to see him on his bed of death, and found him sad because not a single truth appeared certain to his intelligence. "What! Mr Barthèz," said the priest, "do you not discover some certainty at least in mathematics?" "Mathematics!" replied Barthèz; "I see in them a sequence of consequences perfectly linked together, but the basis I know not."* The basis!

* This anecdote is cited in the first volume of the *Essay on Indifference,* by De la Mennais.

You will perceive that Barthèz did not contest the phenomenon; he sought the basis; he wished to touch it as he touched the phenomenon; he was discouraged because he must die without having seen it. Unhappy man, he knew not that death was about to show it to him, but too late! For the basis of mathematics, as of all the rest, is the divine essence.

Nevertheless, I grant you that, for the generality of minds, your observation is just. The generality of minds have no difficulty in recognizing what is hidden behind the phenomena of nature: wherefore then do they doubt so easily the invisible truths which are manifested by religious phenomena? This facility of doubt is not attributable to religious phenomena being less numerous, less striking, less permanent than the others; for they fill the universe with their presence; we encounter them everywhere; they importune us by the perseverance and hardihood of their action. Every day the world complains that religion menaces all and invades all; kings, republics, philosophers, poets, orators, artists, all the principalities of the earth are occupied with it, as Holland is occupied with its dike in keeping out the sea. No one employs himself in arresting the sun or the tide, a multitude in arresting religion. It would then be false to accuse the phenomena of religion of rarity or impotence: they are as potent and as numerous as the others. Why is faith, which is their legitimate conclusion, less within the range of our faculties?

Is it that our adhesion is disturbed by mysteries? But whoever admits the existence of matter admits all that is most mysterious in the world. We cannot represent to ourselves what it is, our senses and our thought tell us nothing—

and, nevertheless, we believe that it exists. The moment you make this admission you admit all imaginable mysteries. When I adore the mystery of the Trinity you ask me whether I comprehend it, and I, when you affirm the existence of matter, I ask you in like manner whether you comprehend. Matter, you will say to me, is but a word. Yes, but a word necessary, fundamental, sacred, without which nothing can be conceived. What objections, moreover, can you seriously deduce from the phenomenal order, the only one which you know, against the substantial order, which you know not? Even if it be granted that no phenomenon manifests anything to us which resembles the Trinity, what should we conclude save the dissimilarity of the two regions with which our thought is occupied? But even this is not so, and when we study the Christian dogmas you will perceive that the substantial order is reflected everywhere, although with inferior proportions, in the phenomenal order.

There remains then always the question proposed: Why is divine faith more difficult than natural faith?

I am tempted to ask you if you are quite sure that divine faith is indeed more difficult than natural faith. You live in an age in which religious faith has undergone, amongst the peoples, an incontestable decadence, and you are persuaded that this state of moral misery is the normal state of the human race. It is an error which history does not justify. Man, Aristotle has said, is a *religious animal*, he has everywhere believed in the Divinity, in His private and public communications with souls and empires, in the efficacy of prayer, of sacrifice, and of worship, in a future, happy or mise-

rable, beyond time; he has believed all that with the greatest facility, with imperturbable constancy, not only when religion was complaisant with his passions, but since it has humiliated and crushed them; not only under the reign of Adonis and of Venus, but under the ensanguined reign of crucified love. Humanity has never ceased to present its vows and its tears at the foot of the altars; it has not ceased to uplift to God hands which appealed to Him, hands which have obtained His favours, and which are the cause that, in the book the most illustrious and the holiest in the world, God has taken the title of the "Desired of Nations." The wits have immolated this world-wide faith of their ancestors and of their children to a parricidal raillery; they have lifted against it every arm, that of science and that of contempt, that of lying and that of eloquence; they have had six thousand years against it: the faith of the people has been the stronger: it lives, it is born anew, it speaks to you, it commands you, and your presence here is a submission to the orders which you have received from it. Which of you will die tranquilly if faith has not pardoned him? Which of you will advance without fear towards eternity if faith has not anointed his feet for the passage? Which of you has aught against it save his vices?

Ask not then why religious faith is difficult, but why, at certain epochs, amongst certain peoples, it has undergone diminution. For humanity believes in God as easily as it believes in the existence of matter; it prays to God quite as naturally as it lives. And as to you who are not humanity, and who really find it difficult to believe, consider that we believe willingly what

we love, and rarely what we love not. To the question of divine faith is united the question of divine virtue.—12*th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXI

Prayer

AFTER Achilles had slain Hector, and dragged him seven times around the besieged city, an old man disarmed presented himself in the evening at the entrance of the Grecian chieftain's tent. It was Priam. He came to beg from the pitiless victor the lifeless body of his son, and, having kissed his hand, said to him: "How great must be my woe when I kiss the hand which has killed my son!" Achilles wept, and gave up the body of his enemy. What power moved that fierce heart? What charm triumphed over it? The power, the charm, it was prayer. If force met not somewhere a barrier to arrest it, if there were here below but force against force, there would be no hope for the lowly and the wretched. God vouchsafed to feebleness and to misery an arm which causes the sword to fall, calms anger, turns aside insult, makes amends for the inequality of conditions; He gave them prayer. Prayer is the queen of the world. Clothed in humble garments, with bowed head, with outstretched hands, it protects the universe by its suppliant majesty; it passes ceaselessly from the heart of the weak to the heart of the strong, and the lower the place whence its plaint ascends, and the greater the throne which it reaches, the more its empire is assured. If an insect could pray to us when we are about to

tread upon it, its prayer would move us to great compassion; and as nothing is higher than God, no prayer is more meritorious than that which ascends to Him. It is prayer which re-establishes our relations with God, reminds us of His action, does Him violence without affecting His liberty, and is, consequently, the mother of faith. Therefore it is that Jesus Christ has said: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." *—13*th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXII

Reason and Faith

THERE are two forces in the human mind: reason, having its source in the natural order, and religion, which has been transmitted to us from age to age, by tradition and authority. Now, the system is false which teaches that the author of human nature has implanted there two forces which conclude contradictorily instead of concurring harmoniously; that is to say, that unity being the law of all beings, and an absolute necessity for all that live, God has placed in the breast of mankind two inimical and irreconcilable forces. This is impossible. Being and unity are one and the same thing, as St Thomas excellently says. Mankind has not come forth from God in a state of Manicheism; there are in us two principles which harmonize. Reason and faith have given forth the same sound from all

* Matt. vii, 7, 8.

eternity, although in a different way. They are like the two harps, Eolian and Ionian. The Eolian harp, suspended in the forest, moaned to the free action of the winds; the Ionian harp was touched by the skilful hand of the artist; but both harmonized and accorded. Reason is as the harp of Eolia—wild, free, inspired, and animated by the storm; faith is as the harp of Ionia—better regulated, more calm, more divine; but the lyre of nature and that of art, the lyre of men and that of the children of God, both sing essentially the same canticle. They speak of God to the universe, they announce Him, they prophesy of Him, they give Him thanks, they uplift man to immortality by their harmonious and unanimous vibration. It is reason, voluntarily proud, which hears not the sounds of faith; it is ignorant faith which hears not the sounds of reason and fails to render it justice. Yes, as Hippocrates said of the human body, everything concurs and concords in humanity. Reason and faith—the reason of statesmen, the reason of men of genius, the popular reason—all are harmonious, all are brethren and fellow citizens; and if there be strife among them, the cause is not in the elements of our constitution, because this would be to suppose that the principle of our life is contradiction. But contradiction is death, and we have not been created dead but living.—15*th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXIII

The Zeal of Statesmen against Catholic Doctrine

We witness a not unimportant phenomenon when we see the passions of man exciting against a doctrine the repulsion which exists in the world against Catholic doctrine. I can easily understand individual men, wounded in their pride and wounded in their senses, revolting against Christianity. But what would be the result? Partial revolts, protestations unnoticed amid the general respect of humanity. Vice would conceal itself; it would even clothe itself exteriorly with the garments of truth; and it would leave society, like an army in battle array, to pursue its way without being disturbed by the obscure treasons which are unnoticed amid the common fidelity. As an army is not hindered in its march or its designs by the faint hearts which beat beneath the firelock and the powder, so, if there were question only of isolated repulsions, society would pass on, bearing with it all this mud in its waves, as a river carries with it the impure sands, and bearing us all to the infinite in this ocean of life, of which the Catholic doctrine is here below the course and the movement.

But there is another thing. The war against Catholic doctrine is not the war of a forlorn hope; it is a civil war, a social war; and as this war has been for eighteen hundred years the whole of history, as it embraces your destiny and that of your posterity, I must ask your attention that

you consider more thoroughly the public passion of statesmen against Catholic doctrine. The question is grave, it is delicate; but, be assured, I will treat you as Massillon treated Louis XIV in the chapel of Versailles. Whatever may be your requirements and my good will, I cannot do better for you than to treat you as the great age treated its great king.

One of the most potent passions of man is the passion of sovereignty. Not only does man desire to be free, but he desires to be master; not only does he desire to be master of himself and of his household, but he desires to be master of others and of their households. The rage for domination—as the illustrious Count de Maistre has said—is innate in the heart of man. And I blame him for this expression, for the desire for sovereignty in man is not a rage, it is a generous passion. A man is endowed with all the gifts of birth and fortune; he can live amid the joys of family, of friendship, of luxury, of honours, of peace; he does not wish it. He shuts himself up in a bureau; he amasses without stint labours and difficulties. He grows grey under the weight of affairs which are not his, having for recompense only the ingratitude of those whom he serves, the rivalry of ambitions parallel with his, and the blame of the indifferent. A boy fresh from school takes a pen in hand; and he who has but a shade of rising talent, who has no ancestors, can show no services, to whom society owes nothing save the pardon of his temerity—he attacks the statesman, who, in place of enjoying his fortune and his name, has hardly reserved to himself time to drink, between the anxieties of the morning and those of the evening, a glass of

watered wine.* The statesman takes no notice of him. He passes from his bureau to the field of battle; he watches beside the sword of Alexander to give counsel; he signs treaties of which the passions of posterity will demand an account. And at length he dies, cut short in his course by labours, by cares, by calumny; he dies, and, while waiting for his future to arise, his contemporaries engrave an epigram on his tomb.

That ambition is a passion, I admit; but at least it is a passion which requires magnanimity; and, after the disinterested service of God, I know nothing more heroic than the public service of the statesman. Count de Maistre might have said that the desire for sovereignty is innate in the heart of man: and why not? Do you know the first word which was spoken to you when you came from the hands of God? Do you know what was the first benediction of humanity? Hear it, son of Adam, and learn your greatness: "Increase and multiply"—as was said to the human race, when God spoke to it for the first time—"Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth."† If such is your vocation, if you have been called to govern the earth as the celestial spirits have been called to govern the superior spheres, why should you not have the ambition of your nature? This ambition has been ill-regulated, no doubt; but still, in its source, it was the will of God, and if it did not exist the human race would perish.

From the earliest times the sons of Adam, grouped in families, were dispersed over the

* Un verre d'eau tout sanglant. † Gen. i, 28.

earth; and, however it was, they confided the sovereignty to an assembly, to a man, or to a race; and, by the constitution of sovereignty, the families were elevated to the quality of a nation or of a state. The state, it is man at his highest power; the state, it is the moral force seated on the frontier of the peoples, and which guards their territory and compels the respect of strangers; the state, it is the protection of all rights, of all duties; it is living justice, which, at every moment, watches over millions of men and takes care that not a hair of their heads shall fall with impunity; the state, it is the blood which has been shed for ages by a people—it is its ancestors, its history, battles gained and battles lost—it is its flag without a stain—for even when it has received a stain we never avow it, and it is our duty that the national flag be judged by God alone; the state, it is the unity and the solidarity of a great human family. Ah, yes! the state, it is a sublime and sacred thing, and Christianity has never thwarted it. It has thwarted the hearts of nations, justice, peace, glory, unity! Ah! believe it not. When it came, it found human sovereignty dishonoured by excesses; it found it prostrate amid crimes. It raised it up and purified it; it anointed it in its basilicas by the hand of its pontiffs. It arrested the march of Clovis upon the frontier, and imparted to him lessons which awaked in the mind of the people confidence, respect, love. It created Christian royalty, and with it fidelity, that sentiment which made an infant of the royal blood sacred for all the nation; and, devotion to God being inseparable from devotion to the state, there arose in all hearts an enthusiasm thus expressed by the poet:

Si mourir pour son prince est un illustre sort,
Quand on meurt pour son Dieu, quelle sera la mort!

Christianity has then laboured for the state; it has laboured for human sovereignty, for the sake of God and of the native land; it has elevated the statesman higher than any doctrine has elevated him. And I feel assured that just now, when I commenced to speak, you formed a judgment, from my very accent, as to my estimate of a great statesman.

And, nevertheless, the representatives and the organs of human sovereignty have often been found, and are still found in great numbers, amongst the adversaries of Catholic doctrine. How does this happen? Through what error or what ingratitude have they thus recompensed it? It is that, while recognizing, serving and honouring human sovereignty, Catholic doctrine declares that it has limits, and that, at all events, it is not more extended than the sovereignty of God. But God has in Himself a law which is the limit, if one may so speak, of His omnipotence; that is to say, His justice, His goodness, His wisdom, which are Himself, do not permit that ever, in the exercise of His omnipotence, He pass the bounds of what is true, holy, and just. God is not only the living sovereignty, but He is the living law, the eternal law, and He has given us an outflowing from this law in the natural law and the divine law.

And these two laws, immutable expression of the relations of all intelligent beings, to whom have they been confided from the beginning? Is it to the human sovereignty, to the state? No, never! Never has the state been the depositary of the divine law or the natural law. And who then has been the depositary of them from the beginning? Who? A great power, a power which is not sub-divisible, like the

nations; a power which extends from one end of the world to the other; a power which, like the electric force, or like the load-stone, passes incessantly from one pole to the other of humanity—Conscience! Conscience it is which, from the beginning, has been the depositary of the natural law and of the divine law, and which has ever been in the world the counterpoise of human sovereignty. But before Christianity, or rather before Jesus Christ—for Christianity extends back to the cradle of things—before Jesus Christ, the human conscience was feeble; it betrayed the charge which had been confided to it. And what has Jesus Christ done? He has restored the human conscience. He breathed upon it one day, and said: "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall remit they shall be remitted them, whose sins you shall retain they shall be retained. What you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven, what you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed in heaven." He said to it again: "Fear not those who kill the body, but who cannot kill the soul; you will be led before deified human consciences, before princes, before presidents, and you will be interrogated; weigh not what you ought to say, for I will put words in your mouth, which no one can resist." Jesus Christ has renewed the conscience; He has given to it a power which it had not before; He has prescribed for it to obey God rather than men; He has armed it for martyrdom against human sovereignty, degenerated into tyranny. "My soul to God, my heart to my King, my body is in the hands of the wicked—let them do with it what they will." Such is the conscience given to the world by Jesus Christ—the Catholic conscience. It was

not a priest who held this language, but Achille de Harlay, first president of the parliament of Paris. Neither was it to the profit of the priesthood that the spiritual power of conscience was exalted and reconstituted.

What have we gained by it? Before Jesus Christ, the priesthood, although dishonoured by error, was honoured, loved, borne in the arms of the empire. The most illustrious families of Egypt, of Greece, and of Rome composed the pontifical colleges, and if there was found in those times a man who dared to say of the pagan priesthood what is said of the Catholic priesthood, the fasces of the Republic would of themselves have opened to scourge the profaner of the rights and of the guardians of the human conscience. But as for us Catholic priests, our lot is very different. There has been given to us what the others had not: the power and the grace to resist you. There has been given to us the sovereignty of conscience, with the command to shed our blood even to the last drop in its defence; and we have shed it, we shed it every day. We do more: martyrdom is a little thing; what is more difficult is to resist the non-persecuting powers, the desires of statesmen often worthy of the highest esteem; to struggle with them foot to foot, from day to day. Ah when a priest wishes to be at peace and to enjoy this world, his road is plain. Let him yield, let him retire before the human sovereignty; let him at each trial act like a pagan priest, instead of acting like a Christian priest; honours, public esteem, the repute of tolerance, the approval of public opinion—all are his to the full, and even it needs not much skill to veil his weakness and save the appearance of priestly and Catholic dignity. But let a poor priest value his con-

science more than his life, let him resist the efforts of human sovereignty; it is then commences the dolorous martyrdom of combating those whom he esteems and loves, and of drinking the chalice of a hatred, by so much the more unmerited as he labours and suffers for those even who pursue him.

For whose benefit then has the power of conscience been instituted? For whose benefit? For your benefit, for the benefit of humanity. This natural and divine law, of which we are the guardians and not the usufructuaries, the victims and not the beneficiaries—this law, it is your rights, your liberty, your eternal charter, the very essence of God in so far as it protects you against your passions and the passions of the whole universe. Ah! look then once in your life upon the bosom of the Church; that great scar which you see, that scar ever humid, it is blood the purest and most faithful that has ever been shed for humanity.

Great God! Thou knowest these things, Thou who hast made them; Thou knowest why Thou hast established the power of conscience at the same time as the power of human sovereignty: I beseech Thee, in presence of this great assembly, to deign to extend Thy hand over us, to illumine minds, to enable them to perceive where are indeed the defenders of their rights and of their best interests. Protect this work which Thou hast accomplished in the midst of the nations; maintain the sovereignty of conscience, without prejudice to human sovereignty, maintain the distinction between the temporal power and the spiritual power, whence has resulted the civilization of the world! O God, protect Christianity! O God, save Christianity!—16*th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXIV

The Zeal of Men of Genius against Catholic Doctrine

GENIUS is, humanly speaking, the greatest power which has been created by God for the discovery of truth. It is a rapid and vast intuition of the relations which unite beings, a limpid lake wherein God and the universe are reflected with as much colour as light. It is also the faculty of rendering ideas visible to those who themselves would not have discovered them, of incarnating them in striking images, and of exciting in the soul a sentiment which awakes it while enlightening it, which urges it to abase itself before this action of genius and to surrender itself to it in a manner analogous to that which is experienced when love lays hold on us and commands us.

Thus naturally, men of genius hold the sceptre of ideas, as statesmen hold the sceptre of things. And indeed, before the coming of Christ, they ruled their empire with all but supreme power; they composed fables, and these fables became gods. One day, a man of genius went forth from his study to walk in his garden; there he opened his mouth of gold; young men, like you thirsting for knowledge, came to listen to him, to crowd around him, to hang on his words,* and these were the platonists, the peripatetics, the stoics. Every man of genius found pleasure in assembling intelli-

* Se pendre à son cou.

gences around him, in forming a school from them, in governing them, in fine in satisfying that spiritual ambition which is far more gratifying than the ambition of kings. A man is born to a throne; but, although one is born a poet, a philosopher, an orator, nature does not, by its gifts, relieve him of the necessity of clearing his way towards glory, and the honour of calling himself the son of his own toil and the father of his sovereignty. Nothing indeed brings man nearer to the resemblance of God, who has no origin, but is self-existent; nothing, I say, renders man more like to God, in respect of origin, than to exist of himself, to have made himself, to have achieved a name, to be able to say: I am indebted only to myself. And this thirst for glory, this self-love, deliciously flattered by the position of leader of a school, these overflowings of pride, they are the outcome of genius. Like the horse of the scripture who neighs at the sound of the trumpet, when the man of genius hears the buzz of ideas, his heart beats, his nerves thrill,* his eye lights up, and he says to himself: Let us advance! and he creates; he pronounces a *fiat!* And as God delights in those armies of suns which He has ranged around His throne, genius takes delight in the systems it evokes around it, that humanity may adore them, as of old it adored the stars of the firmament. Here, indeed, is great pride, but let us not condemn it too severely; even when the man of genius goes astray, let us pity him; let us remember that, when Plato condemned the poets to exile from the city, he recommended that they should be crowned with flowers and that they should be conducted to the gates to

* Ses cheveux se dressent.

the sound of the lyre, to honour the ray of the divinity which was in them, while unwilling to accept their domination.

But, this sceptre of ideas, we have broken it. Yes, let us confess it, for what profits it to dissimulate? Yes, we have broken the sceptre of ideas in the hand of the men of genius. Since the coming of Christ, there have been no more schools of philosophy; Socrates, Plato, Zeno, and so many others, and their disciples, who, ages after their death, swore by their name, and dared not to swerve from any page they had written—all that is no more; philosophy has become powerless to found schools, and to secure obedience. We ask in Europe: where is there a philosophy? an established school? We ask it: there is no reply. And nevertheless you have great minds; I do not say it in irony: yes, you have great minds. And yet they cannot found, I do not say a school to live a thousand years, but a school to last for their lives, like dethroned sovereigns lacking land wherein their sheathed sword may believe itself at home. Let us see to whom the sceptre of ideas has been transferred from the men of genius. One day Christ brought together some fishermen who cast their nets upon the border of a lake, and another day He said to them: Go and teach all nations! And again another day, these fishermen being together in a chamber, a wind passes over them; they descend into the public streets, they speak, thousands of men assemble to hear their words, they destroy the edifice of pagan science and religion; and it is to these humble men and to their successors that the sceptre of ideas, the noblest upon earth, has been transferred! A herdsman, a

workman, who had all his life handled only wood and iron, seeing his child playing in his workshop, said to himself: I will make him a prophet, an apostle. He goes up to the temple, he presents this little boy to the pontiff; the pontiff receives him into his arms, brings him up, gives him the milk of the Gospel, and one day when he had grown, he lays him upon the ground in his basilica, he pronounces over him mysterious words, he anoints his forehead and his hands, and says to him: Son of a herdsman, arise, mount the throne of truth, speak to men, to kings, to peoples, fear nothing; let all authority bow down before the authority of thy word, humble all pride which elevates itself against the science of God; nothing can resist thee, provided thou hast in thy bosom the faith and the charity of thy Master.

Here is a strange spectacle, and do you not think that on seeing it men of genius will be indignant and will say to us: You, priests of Catholic doctrine, you believe yourselves the suzerain lords of truth and of ideas; but remember you have no scholars amongst you, you have no writers, you have no orators. Where are your books? Look into the dictionary of biography: where is your name? If we meet with it by chance, and ask of the universe who you are, the universe jeers and passes by, like the wind which replies to those who question it only by mocking them.

It is true, it is indeed true; we have not genius, and when we have had it we have not been the better for it. We have not genius, and why should we have it? Hear what St Paul says: "It is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; and the prudence of the prudent I

will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" *

And St Paul, triumphing in the idea of our personal imbecility, exclaimed: "See your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are." †

Where, indeed, would be the divinity of our mission if we had more science and were different from the rest of men? If our books were signed at each page by the hand of genius we would be no more than a human power. We must be little ones, fools for Jesus Christ, for then the people, who have good sense, and the men of genius, who have it also when they wish, will say to themselves: How very extraordinary it is that these little ones, after eighteen centuries, are the masters of all, and that we are obliged to invoke the powers of the world against them! I do not laugh at you, neither do I humiliate myself; but I am armed with the power which God has given us in our feebleness and I rejoice in it. We alone can triumph without self-love, because our triumph comes not from ourselves.

But, to conclude: for whose benefit has the sceptre of ideas been transferred from the strong

* 1 Cor. i, 19, 20. † Ibid. 26, etc.

to the feeble, from the hands of genius to the hands of the Church? for whose benefit, if it be not for the benefit of humanity? The most precious possession which man can have is truth; for truth is the knowledge of God, it is God filling our minds as light fills our eyes. But genius, powerful and creative, adores itself much more than it adores truth. As a guardian of it, it is not much to be depended on; it has always a tendency to substitute its own idea for the divine idea. God then, seeing that the world did not desire, as St Paul says, to preserve the truth by wisdom, God confided the truth to the folly of faith; He preferred faith, which is the cult of truth, the humble adoration of truth, to science and to genius, without excluding them nevertheless, when they themselves desire to adore and to serve. He preferred to descend into a vase of wood, reverential and pure, rather than to rest in a vase of gold, too often impure and rebellious. Yes, God preferred to the proud oligarchy of genius the sacred democracy of faith and of charity. I thank Him for it from my inmost soul. I pray that it may be always thus, and that here below virtue may ever be a thing greater and more potent than genius.—*Ibid.*

XXV

The Republic of Paraguay

WE are in the midst of savage tribes. A priest, bearing a breviary, a crucifix, and a violin, finds a passage through their forests. Having prayed, he takes the violin in his hand and causes its chords to vibrate like an echo of the divine

reason; he plays, the savages issue from their huts; they gaze at him, they listen; the man who plays cuts a branch from a tree, he makes a cross of it, he fixes it in the earth, and says to them, mutilating upon his lips the fragments which compose their language: "Upon the wood which you see a God was crucified for you; kneel down, adore Him, and be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Leave your arrows and your nakedness; form a holy republic of brethren; let each one labour for the community; sow, plant, reap, for those who can neither sow, nor plant nor reap." And, lo! the admirable society of Paraguay arises, that famous republic, as compared with which the Republics of Athens and of Rome were but a play of slaves. I name not its authors. When I pass before St Peter's at Rome, and am asked who built it, I answer not, for the whole world knows that it was Michael Angelo Buonarrotti.—17*th Conference of Notre Dame.*

XXVI

The Failure of Philosophy

I LOOK for the subjects of human reason, the subjects of philosophy; where are they? Where are the subjects of Plato, of Aristotle, of Zeno, of Leibnitz, of Kant? Unfortunately for it, philosophy engenders disciples who, scarce issued from its bosom, having received from it the arm of the spirit, turn on their masters, and constitute new schools upon the ruins of the schools whence they have come forth. Thus has it been with the ancient philosophers, thus with the new. Y

have no subjects: how can you have sovereignty or supremacy? And you are still more unfortunate than in not having subjects: you have no children. O philosophers, proud rulers of the human mind, where are your flocks, where are the souls you love with a filial love? I am still young, and yet I have already seen many souls in mine. I have had many tears of the soul upon my cheeks. As a Christian and a religious, I have clasped many spiritual friends to my breast. Jesus Christ promised it to us when He said: "There is no man who hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for My sake, and for the gospel, who shall not receive . . . . houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands."* O philosophers, who claim supremacy for human reason over catholic reason, where are your children? Where are the tears dried up, the confessions heard, the amelioration of existence, the consolations which have gone forth from you? Ah! even if you have subjects, you have not children. And where paternity is wanting, how can you have supremacy?—*20th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXVII

Humility

With awe I look into the heart of man to ascertain the sentiment which he has of himself, and I need not to go far: I have, alas! but to search my own to discover what passes in that of my fellow-men. I search the heart of man, and I find

* Mark x, 29, 30.

that he loves himself. He loves himself, and I blame him not for it. Why should he hate himself? But loving himself is not all; he loves himself more than any other, he loves himself above all, he loves himself exclusively, he loves himself even to pride, even to desiring to be the first and solely the first. Let us look into ourselves. Whether we were born to a throne or in the workshop of an artizan, from the moment the moral life was first awakened within us we have not ceased to aspire in the depths of our hearts to the exaltation of pre-eminence. Cæsar, it is said, passing through some village of the Alps, and learning that the people were agitated in that little forum about the choice of a chief, halted for a moment to look on. His captains who attended him were astonished: "Are there in this place also disputes as to pre-eminence?" And Cæsar, great man as he was, said to them: "I would prefer being first in this little village to being second in Rome." Such is the true voice of nature. Wherever we are, we desire to be first. Artists predestined to reproduce subjects by the pencil or the graver; orators skilful in creating thoughts in the mind of the multitude; generals commanding battalions and promising them the flight of the enemy; ministers guiding empires; kings agitated beneath the purple—we all aspire to nothing less than primacy, and to solitary primacy. We are content only when, measuring with a glance all that surrounds us, we find a void, and beyond this void, as far beyond it as possible, a world on its knees to adore us.

A young man has received from nature a handsome person; he has fair hair, blue eyes, a fine forehead, an amiable smile; fragile creature that he is, you think that he aspires but to the

destiny of a flower. You deceive yourself. He also dreams of pre-eminence and domination; with these external attractions which fascinate hearts, he seeks to render himself an ephemeral object of admiration upon those lips of men which tell of prestige and glory that vanish the instant of their birth.

In a word, we aspire to pre-eminence, even by the potency of nothingness. I will insist no further upon this truth, for it is commonplace, and, by God's grace, I abhor what is commonplace.

But let us see what follows. When man, thus inebriated with himself, looks around him, does he find that which corresponds to the illusions of his pride? No; quite the contrary. He finds ranks formed in which he has no place: the hierarchy of birth, the memorials of an ancient glory which has traversed ages, and which upon the brow of the man without merit still glitters by the power of history; the hierarchy of talent which nature has distributed in its caprice, and which, despite all our protestations, plants itself above us, and offers to our self-love magnificent insults; the hierarchy of fortune acquired by virtue, by vice, or by skill; hierarchies of every form and of every name, reposing upon laws or traditions, upon necessities, upon abysses ever ready to open up when what time has built is attacked. And seeing these things, man, fallen from nothing into the midst of all these thrones which defy him, man is filled with indignation; and he reacts with all the force of that power of command which is in him, and which rebels even against nature; as Ajax, when about to die, menaced the majesty of the gods with the fragment of his sword, his irritated pride goads him

on to defy the world; hatred of the superiority under which he groans becomes united in his heart with hatred of the equality which he repels. Is it not Mahomet who has somewhere said:

Equals! Mahomet has long had none!

And, as you know, the modern Cæsar, receiving while in Egypt a letter from a member of the institute which commenced in these words, "My dear colleague," crushed the paper in that hand which was accustomed to countersign victory, and repeated with disdain: "My dear colleague! What a style!" We may decree equality in charters, but pride ratifies the proclamation of it only in order to humble those who are higher than itself, not to elevate those who are lower. Hatred of superiority is but another name for hatred of equality and contempt of inferiority. These are the three legitimate children of pride. If a veritable elevation reigned in the heart, fascinated by the idea of pre-eminence, we should honour it. But pride allies itself too often with baseness. There is a hollow baseness in pride which inflicts on it torments the most cruel tyrants could not invent. That conscience, so delicate regarding the throne on which it places itself, that conscience sells and buys itself; it humiliates in order to exalt itself; it begs on its knees for the purple which covers its nakedness; it accepts contempt in order to acquire the right to inflict it.

Such is man as he is, such the sentiment which he entertains of himself, and the normal consequences of that sentiment. But I say that evidently it is a sentiment false, inhuman, and unfortunate; and it requires no great effort of

logic to prove what I say. It is a false sentiment, because it is impossible that everybody can be first, and consequently it cannot be the will of nature or of Providence, whichever name you give to it, to call us to pre-eminence. If pre-eminence were our end and our vocation, one only being would exist; and even then he would not be the first, because that there may be first there must be last. It is an inhuman sentiment, for it eventuates in the degradation of all who do not attain the first place, and in contempt for all who are not so happy or of such ability as to raise themselves to an elevated position. Finally, it is an unfortunate sentiment, for it contradicts all the realities of life. Pride craves infinitude, and life gives but little, and is so much the more cruel in that it favours some, and shows from afar to panting ambition its rare parvenus. Pride says to an artizan that he is sovereign, and the unfortunate man goes forth into the street, his mind full of his sovereignty, to put his hand to a work which is strange to him, and which he dishonours at the outset by his vices. How, think you, can happiness exist with a contradiction so manifest between what we feel and what really is?

Catholic doctrine proposes to effect a radical change in the sentiment which we entertain naturally of ourselves. It attacks this sentiment which appeared indestructible and inseparable from our essence; it hopes to form in us another of quite a contrary character; and I admire this hope and this singular boldness. I admire a doctrine which fears not to pull down man to the very base, which not only proposes to extirpate within him a radical sentiment, but which creates a contrary one, and promises to inaugurate it in

the very depths of his heart. Man lived in pride; he will live in humility. And what is humility? Humility is a voluntary acceptation of the place which has been marked out for us in the hierarchy of beings, a possession of ourselves, with a moderation equal to our worth, and which inclines us to descend towards that which is not of equal value with ourselves. Pride sought to ascend; humility seeks to descend. Pride involved a hatred of superiority, a hatred of equality, a contempt of inferiority; humility includes in itself a love and respect for superiority in those whom Providence has constituted our superiors, a love and respect for equality in those whom Providence has constituted our equals, a love and respect for inferiority not only in those whom Providence has constituted our inferiors, but moreover, and in an absolute manner, in ourselves. Pride aspired to be the first, humility aspires to the lowest rank. Pride desired to be king, humility desires to be servant. Incredible sentiment, which had not even a name in the language of men, and which has made for itself a name, a history, and a glory!

I say a glory, for think not that the object of humility is to abase us; its object is to raise us. No other doctrine has pretended to exalt the human soul as much as Catholic doctrine; no other has proposed to it an ambition greater or more extraordinary. It speaks to it only of its divine origin and end; it substitutes for it eternity for immortality; it gives to it God as a brother and heaven as a country; it inspires it with so profound a respect for itself, that the least tarnish on its uprightness and its conscience fills it with horror, and vain are its endeavours to live tranquilly when the slightest stain has

compromised the splendour of its personal dignity. Thus, the highest exaltation of the soul ought to be allied, and is allied in Catholic doctrine, with the most profound humility. How is this? How is a measureless ambition compatible with quite a contrary aspiration?

I ought not to enter upon this explication, as I am treating only of the phenomena of doctrine; but it is useful from time to time to touch upon the interior secrets of things. Let us explain, then, the apparent contradiction before us, and penetrate the very essence of humility.

True elevation does not consist in the elevation of nature, in the material or exterior hierarchy of beings. The true elevation, the essential and eternal elevation, is the elevation of merit, the elevation of virtue. Birth, fortune, genius are nothing before God. For what is birth before God, who has not been born? What is fortune before God, who has made the world? What is genius before God, who is infinite mind, and from whom comes to us the little extraordinary flame to which we give that fine title? Evidently nothing. That which is something before God, that by which we draw nigh to Him, is personal elevation due to the effort of a virtue which, in whatever rank of nature we have been placed, produces in the soul a true image of the divinity. Now, the lower the station wherein virtue dwells, the greater is its merit. To imitate God, when we touch the first steps of His throne, when we see Him almost face to face, is not very meritorious; but if a creature placed in an inferior rank, if a simple man—without birth, without fortune, without genius—bent over the implements of a workshop, applying himself to the meanest handicraft, if such a man, by a

movement of his heart, raises himself to God, if he draws forth from his soul waves of spotless love, if he presents to God, although so superior, an image of Himself, assuredly that man's abasement in the hierarchy of nature will augment his elevation in the hierarchy of merit. Humility, then, does not exclude exaltation; it contributes to it; nay, more, it produces it. For what is the virtue that constitutes the hierarchy of merit? It is evidently nothing else but the devotion of ourselves to others. Now, can we devote ourselves without self-abnegation? Can we sacrifice ourselves unless the first sacrifice be that of pride? For what is pride if not self, always self, self before all others, self before the universe, self before humanity, self before God? What is pride but egotism itself? And as egotism and virtue are two words which exclude one another, it follows that pride and virtue exclude one another also; and thus it is clear that virtue and humility have but one and the same definition, and that to humble is to exalt ourselves. Pride is but the form which egotism assumes, the passion of a nothingness concentrated in self and desirous to oppress all others; humility is the form which love assumes, the passion of a being truly great, which desires to become little in order the better to bestow itself. God is the most humble of beings; He who is without equal has equals in the triplicity of the divine personality; He who is immeasurably the highest has abased Himself towards nothingness, in order to create being; towards man, in order to assume his nature. Of Him, much more truly than of the Roman emperor, the poet might have said:

> And, standing on the summit, he aspires to descend.

Such is the sentiment regarding himself which the Catholic doctrine seeks to implant in man. Has it succeeded in doing so? Be you the judges. Has it really created humility in man? Has it induced man voluntarily to descend? You know it all; the history of Catholicism is known to you; you know what sentiment animated the saints, with what sentiment the Church inspires you as regards yourselves. Catholic doctrine it is which has inaugurated in the world the sincere love of superiority; that it is which has produced the sentiment of equality and fraternity, according to the expression of the Apostle: "Diligite caritatem fraternitatis." Finally, that it is which has inclined us to become little, to descend from rank, from birth, from fortune, from the *éclat* of genius. Celebrated examples have been given by kings themselves, and are still given every day in obscurity by numberless souls, imitators of the humility of Calvary in the midst of the terrible pride which still reigns in humanity, although no longer over humanity.—*21st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXVIII

Luther

In the sixteenth century, Catholic society, always more or less tormented, was face to face with a terrible and fatal epoch. I will not depict for you the evils of the Church at that time. Our fathers have done it with courage and simplicity. The Church has no interest in concealing, I will not say her faults, but the faults of her children. She can admit without fear their

weaknesses in the face of the universe. Therefore it is that I accept, as regards the age of which I speak, everything that you impute to it. It is like the athlete, sick and lying on his bed, who endures voluntarily the insults of his adversaries as they look upon his feeble hands to find in them the signs of death: confident in his strength, he suffers their curiosity to enjoy the insult; the profound beatings of his heart suffice against them, and tell him of the reply which he will make, in the name of life, to the death which they hope for him.

However this may be, there was then a man who desired to reform us, and why not? We ourselves speak to the world only of reformation. In the cloisters, in the episcopal sees, on the apostolic chair, in the first rank of the saints, I see reformers; and in every land where men meet, one day or another, this power of reform must speed and show itself: as on the ocean, when it has for a time been in calm and reveals no longer to the ships which sail it its power and their temerity, a wind rises suddenly on the horizon, which warns the crews to strive by science and energy against the enemy, which is really but a reformer of their sluggish laxity.

Thanks be to God! reformation is then an affair of the Church, and the title of reformer is the noblest, after that of founder, which she bestows upon her children. Sometimes even they are equal in dignity, and Saint Bernard stands side by side with Saint Benedict.

But in the sixteenth century, in a corner of Saxony, there was a man who conceived the idea of reforming us; and indeed he was entitled to do so more than any man of his time; for he had received from God an eloquence which

gushed from his lips or flowed from his pen with equal fecundity, an ardent soul capable of restraining by love as well as subjugating by doctrine, and to his character nothing was wanting to assure the pre-eminence of his mind. Let us add that he was a cenobite. The Church had taken him from the world, clothed him with a religious habit, given him the hair-cloth and the ashes; he had experienced the sweet rod of obedience, the joys of humility. And this union of a fine nature with great grace had prepared him wonderfully for imparting to others all the gifts of heaven which were the greater for having passed through his heart. What more? A man of genius, an orator, a writer, a monk, all power and all glory in his young hand! Let us see how he did his work.

He has finished; but where is it I find him? No longer in the sacred seclusion of the cenobitical tent, but by the hearth of a common dwelling, his feet extended towards the domestic fire, a wife by his side! He, twice consecrated chaste by the unction of the priesthood and the vows of the cloister! He who had been made Christ by the Church, and who had not found the Church sufficiently pure for him! He is married! but not he alone. His word has forced the doors of the old convents of Germany. It has troubled the venerable chastity of the old man, and that still more pure of the young man; it has brought forth from the tomb all the lusts of the flesh. God, by the Catholic doctrine, had not only elevated His priests to absolute continence; He had inspired with the desire for it and made the gift of it to thousands of others. He had prepared for each misery of the world a virginity to be its mother and its sister: this

man has destroyed all. He has dried up the priesthood at its very source in taking from it the stigmata of Jesus Christ, which, by chastity, it ought to bear in its crucified flesh. He has given back to the world the privileged souls whom the Gospel had snatched from it, depopulated the solitudes where prayer held its vigils under the guardianship of mortification. All this heart, all this genius, all this eloquence, all this greatness of soul, all those plans of reformation, have ended, not in a deluge, but in universal marriage.

The words are not mine; they are those of Erasmus. You all know Erasmus. He was, in those times, the first academician in the world. Before the tempests which shook Europe and the Church, he composed prose * with the most consummate elasticity. One of his papers was the subject of discussion in the university. Princes were proud to write to him. But when the thunder burst forth, when he had to devote himself to error or to truth, to give to the one or to the other his eloquence, his glory, and his blood, this worthy man had the courage to remain an academician, and retired to Rotterdam, after giving utterance to a phrase still expressive, but now despised. He saw before he died the fruits of the reformation, unexpected as they were by him, and avenged himself by the words which I have just spoken.—*23rd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

* Il faisait de la prose.—*Molière.*

XXIX

The Eighteenth Century

THE eighteenth century aspired to the accomplishment of a work the most magnificent which had been attempted by men: it aspired to the transformation of humanity. Up to that time humanity had lived in reliance upon religion; the eighteenth century sought to dissolve the union, and to establish over the whole earth the reign of pure reason. Have we not received from God, it said, a reason which emanates from His? Have we not received from Him a conscience which is a reflex of His eternal justice? Man, in so far as he is an intelligent and moral being, is he not a being perfect, free, endowed with truth, knowing good and evil, capable of self-guidance? And if he is so really, if man has an honest conscience, enlightened reason, the same in all ages and in all countries, why those divers religions which dispute the honour of conducting him to a truth which they reciprocally anathematize? Whilst reason is one, universal and pacific, religions, fruits of inexplicable illusions, enlarge in every age the long list of their variations, and make the world a field of battle, pagan against Christian, Protestant against Catholic, Lutheran against Calvinist, Greeks, Armenians, Mahometans, Hindoos, races without number, which drag humanity hither and thither in blood-stained swaddling clothes. Is it not time to restore to it or to give to it unity, whether it has lost it, or has need of a long education to merit it? Such

were the ideas of the eighteenth century, and by a very rare coincidence, there appeared, for the realization of those ideas, a pleiad of superior minds, poets, historians, moralists, novelists, jurisconsults, men eminent in all the varieties of literary and scientific creations, and in the capability of destruction and restoration. Never did so many minds concur in the same thought; and the fortunate age which produced them could say, while contemplating their unanimity and their ardour, that indeed a work truly providential had been confided to it, and that it would soon witness its glorious accomplishment.

Let us respect these hopes of the human mind, these daring promises, this long voyage in the unknown regions of truth; let us respect these argonauts who seek to pass in full sail the pillars of Hercules of humanity, and who see arise before them the fortunate isles of the future.

But what is the action of the Church? The Church seems to grow pale. Bossuet utters no more oracles; Fénelon sleeps in his harmonious memory; Pascal has broken at the tomb his geometrical pen; Bourdaloue speaks no longer in the presence of kings; Massillon has given to the winds of his age the last sounds of Christian eloquence. To Spain, Italy, France, to the whole Catholic world I listen: no voice of power responds to the groans of the outraged Christ. His enemies increase every day. Thrones take part in their conjurations. Catherine II from the midst of the steppes of the Crimea, from a conquest over sea or solitude, writes tender letters to the fortunate geniuses of the moment; Frederic II greets them between two victories; Joseph II goes to visit them, and lays aside the majesty of the Holy Roman Empire on

the threshold of their academies. What say you of it? What say you of the silence of God? What is He doing? Already men have foretold the day of His fall; hearken: one, two, three. . . . to-morrow morning they will bury Christ. Ah! they will give Him a great funeral; they have prepared a magnificent procession; the cathedrals will be there, they will march forth two and two, like the rivers which flow to the ocean, to disappear with a final sound. Again I ask, what say you? It is true, God was silent, He hid Himself. He deprived His Church of everything, everything except Himself; everything, except the triumph of error over error itself. Never, until that time, had He permitted to error its complete development; He had always destroyed it, sooner or later, before it became queen. This time He gave it free scope to the end. Let us wait in our turn, and even before the end, let us observe in public morals what were the effects of the triumph of pure reason.

How did chastity fare in the world—chastity, that virgin called forth from the tomb by Catholic doctrine? How did she fare? In the palace of the Most Christian kings, in the chamber where St Louis had slept, there Sardanapalus lay. Stamboul had visited Versailles, and found itself at home. Women from the lowest depths of degradation toyed with the crown of France; descendants of crusaders filled dishonoured antechambers with their adulation, and kissed as it passed the robe of the reigning courtezan, carrying with them from the throne into their houses the vices which they had adored, the contempt of the sacred laws of marriage, the imitation of the Saturnalia of Rome, seasoned with an impiety

which the familiars of Nero had not known. In place of the plough-share and the sword, shameless youths knew only how to use sarcasm against God and impurity against man. Beneath them moved the citizens, imitators, more or less, of this royal corruption, and adding to its train their degraded sons, as we see behind the powerful kings of the solitude, the lions and their like, the lesser and viler animals, who follow them to lap up their share of the blood which is spilled.

One day at last, the day of God dawned. The ancient people of France was moved by so much ignominy; it stretched forth its right arm, it overthrew this society which had apostatized from virtue and cast it to the earth with a single blow, to the puerile astonishment of all those kings who flattered pure reason! The scaffold succeeded to the throne, mowing down impartially all who were brought to it—king, queen, old men, children, young girls, priests, philosophers, the innocent and the guilty, all enveloped in the solidarity of the age and in its triumph over Jesus Christ. A last scene achieved the reprisals of God. Pure reason desired to celebrate its nuptials, for it had celebrated on the scaffold only its betrothal; it desired to go further and to press on to its nuptials. The gates of this cathedral were opened by its all-powerful orders; an innumerable crowd inundated the parvise, leading to the high altar the divinity who was the outcome of sixty years' preparation. Shall I tell her name? Antiquity had produced images which exposed depravity to the worship of the people: here it was reality, the living marble of flesh and blood. Pause while this great people adores the latest divinity of the world, and celebrates without mysteries the immortal nuptials of pure reason.—*Ibid.*

XXX

The Gift of Truth

When man bestows his goods or the earth beneath his feet, it is much; nevertheless, it is the gift of a thing extrinsic to him. When he gives his heart, it is more; but the gift of that heart, precious as it is, is the gift of a changeable and mortal thing; a time will come when he can no longer command the will to bestow himself. But there is in man something which, while it is himself, is yet more than himself, which does not pass away, nor change, nor die: what do I say? which is more than immortal, which is eternal. For, as Leibnitz says, man is a compound of time and of eternity, and it is by truth that eternity enters into his composition. Offspring of eternity, eternal itself, truth has descended into time in descending into the intelligence of man, and, being subject by this co-existence to suffer with our nature, it communicates to us in turn the rights of its own. Whilst everything in us deteriorates, not excepting the sentiments of the heart and the faculties of the soul, truth preserves its immutable life, and, imparting it to others, we give them something which survives ourselves, which survives death, which blossoms in the tomb, which adorns itself with the ages as with graces descended upon the youth of its eternity.—*24th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXXI

The Last Testament of Christ

JESUS CHRIST is about to leave His disciples and the world; He is about to speak to them His last word, His supreme testament. Listen to Him; it is short: "Go and teach all nations." Go, wait not for humanity, but go forth to meet it; teach, not as a philosopher who disputes and demonstrates, but as an authority which takes its stand and affirms; speak, not to a people, not to a region, not to an age, but to the four winds of heaven and of the future, to the most remote extremities of space and of time, and, according as the enterprise or the good fortune of man will discover new lands, go as rapidly as his courage and his fortune; anticipate even the one and the other, and let the doctrine of which you are the heralds be everywhere the first and the last. What a testament! They are but three words, yet no man had spoken them. Search where you will, you will never meet with these three words: "Go and teach all nations." One Man alone has spoken them, one Man alone could speak them, a Man sure of the efficacy of His word. For you may conceive that, when a dying person desires to make provision for the future, he weighs well his last directions, and gives none which the event can convict of lying or of vanity. Words so absolute as these, "Go and teach all nations," indicate a boundless certitude, the glance of a prophet who, going to his rest, looks forth upon humanity ever attentive and obedient over his tomb. Now these words have

been spoken by Jesus Christ; He has been the first to utter them, the last to utter them, the only one to utter them. Nevertheless, I admit they are but words, and we must see whether they have fulfilled their promise.

Some time after they had been spoken there occurred in the world a singular phenomenon. The universe, that something which passes away and yet remains, which suffers and which laughs, makes peace and war, which overthrows and which crowns kings, which is agitated without knowing whence it comes or whither it goes—this chaos, in a word, hears with wonder a sound of which it can form no idea and which eludes it. As in the night, when all is tranquil and we feel the movement of some presence around us, the universe hears for the first time a word which lives, which moves, which is at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Corinth, at Ephesus, at Athens, at Alexandria, at Rome, in Gaul, from the Danube to the Euphrates, and beyond them; a word which has outstripped Crassus and his battalions, which has gone further than Cæsar, which appeals to Scythians as well as to Greeks, which treats none as strangers or enemies; a word which is not sold or purchased, which exhibits neither fear nor pride; only a word, which says: "I am the truth, and I alone." St Paul has already appeared before the Areopagus, and astonished by his novelties those ancient seekers for novelties; they have created a word to express their surprise, an appropriate word which characterizes the phenomenon of which the universe commences to suspect the power. "What is it," they ask, "that this word-sower would say?" These philosophers had seen men discourse, dispute, analyse, demonstrate, make

fortunes and acquire glory by rhetoric and philosophy; they had not before seen truth sown amid the human race as an efficacious grain which germinates in its time, and which needs but its own nature to flourish and bear fruit.

The thing was done. The Roman empire could no longer conceal the appearance of a new reality which came not from itself, which was installed in its midst, yet not of it, and which already extended beyond its confines. Consultations were held. The politicians, those who see far and near, who know the destiny of peoples and allot to them their years and their days, all these assembled on the Palatine, in the presence of Cæsar, to see for themselves what this thing might be which, without the permission of the prefect of the pretorium, had spread from India to Iberia, even to places which the orders of Cæsar did not reach. But let us be just; they saw very well its power and their weakness; they knew that humanity possessed no word capable of resisting the word which was revealed, and they had no other choice but to accept it as a fact introduced into the destinies of the human race, or to try against it, in despair, the power of the executioner. They chose the latter part; for, to adopt the other, more than genius was necessary: they needed humility. The Cæsars did not profess it. They hoped to effect by force what they hoped not from the doctrinal sap accumulated during forty centuries in the great vessels of humanity. It was no longer possible to impart the Catholic doctrine by the simple process of teaching; the empire determined to stifle the word in the mouth of the apostolate. It became necessary to be silent or to die, to die in the belief

that blood speaks better than words in favour of the truth. There was even a preliminary question: must humanity, ungrateful and unjust, be loved even unto death? may not one retire from it, and, in the peaceful possession of truth, leave the world as it was?

But truth is charity, and charity is not the gift of one's self to his friends, to his relatives, to his fellow-citizens; it is the gift of one's self to strangers and to enemies, to all without distinction. This was foreseen in the Gospel and provided for; it said: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake." It added: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad."* Christ made efficacious the blood shed in testimony of the truth. Did He not, at the supreme moment and with His last sigh, convert the centurion who was on guard at His execution? and, even after His death, the thrust of the lance which pierced His side, did it not change the parricide soldier into a believer and a saint? These were prophetic events; it was the fraternity of the apostolate and of martyrdom eloquently revealed. The apostles were faithful. When the empire sought to silence them in blood, they knew that blood is the word at its highest power; they died, and in death they were still more eloquent than in life. It was almost a law that no land should attain to the knowledge of God unless sprinkled with the blood of martyrs.

The Roman empire became Christian by the apostolate; the barbarians became Christian in

* Matt. v, 44, 45.

their turn by the same way. And when a new world opened to Vasco da Gama and to Christopher Columbus, legions of missionaries followed in their footsteps; India, China, Japan, islands and kingdoms without number were evangelized. From the lakes of Canada to the plains of Paraguay, America was visited by the word of Christ it spread through the forests, upon the rivers, in the cavities of the rocks; it attracted the Carribbeans and the Iroquois; it loved and was loved with a unique love by thousands of races scattered over those vast continents. And at the present day, notwithstanding the misfortunes which have decimated it in Europe and seem to have dried up the milk of its breasts, it pursues the far-reaching work of its propagation. Oceanica, that world scattered through the sea, receives upon the reefs of its islets the doctrine which has converted the great lands; the ancient missions flourish, new missions are established, and blood flows still for the truth as in the time of Galerius and Diocletian. This spectacle is before our eyes; the charity of Catholic doctrine is not an antiquity for a museum; it lives in our midst, it goes forth from us; our fellow-countrymen and our relatives, at the moment in which I speak, bear their voices and their virtues to every point of the globe. The "Annales de la Propagation de la Foi" continue the "Lettres édifiantes et curieuses," which followed the legends of the middle ages, and the legends succeeded the Acts of the Apostles. Every day, for the same cause, men are imprisoned, slain, torn in pieces, die of heat, of hunger, of thirst, forgotten by all the world, but unshaken and content, because they have chosen to accomplish the testament of Jesus Christ: "Go and teach all nations!"—*Ibid.*

XXXII

Mahomet

MAHOMETANISM appeared six hundred years after Jesus Christ. It saw Catholic doctrine in all the magnificence of its expansive proselytism. It was an actual fact, a fact of which Mahomet was a witness in person. Mahomet, having posed as a founder, must in his turn pronounce the *fiat* of the foundation; he also must say: "Go and teach all nations." And indeed we must do justice to him, this *fiat* he pronounced, so far as it is given to man to pronounce it. This *fiat* of the doctrinal donation, of the expansion of the truth, Mahomet dared to pronounce it, but with a variation which reveals at once the man in the place of God. Mahomet said indeed: "Go!" It was much, but hear what follows: "Go and conquer all nations!" He appeals not to the word, but to the scimitar. And why? Why did not this man find twelve apostles? Why, not when dying, but in the prestige of his domination, did he not dare to confide his word to words which were to survive his? Ah! it was genius. Mahomet, like the Cæsars not long before, saw very clearly that, being dead, his eloquence would perish; he saw clearly that, being dead, the prestige of his eagle eye would be extinguished, and that when people would come to look upon him in his sepulchre they would find in the bones of his skull but those inanimate orbs which speak no longer, which no longer promise aught to any one. He knew all that. He relied not upon his death.

And again I say it was genius and power. But as from another point of view he desired to survive, weighing in his ardent hands the future of the world, he understood that it was not necessary to do as the Cæsars had done, who slaughtered without result, and with whom the sword had been but a negation. He drew his sword as an affirmation. He united his doctrine with the destiny of a great war, and charged his legions, in driving home their spears, to engrave the Koran on the heart of humanity. He used the steel as it had not been used before; he made it a living doctrine, an apostolate. Man, when he desires to persuade, opens his lips and his soul. Mahomet opened them once for all; his word when uttered, thenceforth was given to the world as an irrevocable order; he did not say to it, "Go!" He had it borne by his squadrons; and as the universe was once silent to hear the solemn steps of truth, it was again silent at the voice of Mahomet; but the silence was that of a slave, a silence of the vanquished, a silence which dishonoured it.

For to receive a doctrine at the point of a sabre, what is it but to abdicate one's soul? I esteem the error which makes its proposal, and has sufficient faith in itself to try its power to persuade me; but this vile gladiator, who with one hand presents to me the Koran and with the other death, I can have only contempt for him, and, if I am base enough to obey him, a contempt still more profound for myself.

Such was, nevertheless, the work of Mahomet; thus did he propagate his doctrine, thus did he imitate that great word: "Go and teach all nations."—*Ibid.*

XXXIII

Fraternal Love

LOVE, that inexpressible charm which impels us towards an object, and impels us less to bestow ourselves than to merge ourselves in that object —love, that most incomprehensible marvel of our nature, in which we pass all our lives, until we have so far despaired of ourselves as no longer to seek to realize its mystery—love has but one cause, a cause rare and fleeting in humanity. I would conceal its name: I reproach myself, in a measure, for naming it in this pulpit; but it is impossible for me not to pronounce it. Love has but one cause, and that cause is beauty. If man, unprotected by a divine shield, be placed in the presence of a nature resplendent with this terrible gift, he will experience its power: no matter how rebellious, how proud he may be, he will bow down like a child at the feet of this something which he sees, and which has subjugated him by a glance, by a hair of its neck, *in uno crine colli sui*, as the Scriptures admirably say. But this beauty, the sole cause of love, is rare and fleeting in us. It appertains but to a very small number, and the beings who are most richly endowed with it enjoy their crown but for a moment. Adored for one day of their lives, they soon feel the fragility of the gift bestowed upon them; flatterers flee as years descend, and sometimes they wait not for years. The heart captured violently detaches itself with rapidity, and, by the road of experience, those beings so cherished come to possess no longer aught of

themselves or of others, save the relics of a dream.

Beauty, which is the source of love, is also the source of the greatest desolation here below, as if Providence and nature repented of having made some of us so rich and rare a present.

If such be the cause of love, how can humanity be loved? Apart from the small number who possess it, and who exhibit so many imperfections, what are the rest? What does man see around him? Men not only deprived of the grace and the majesty of their nature, but disfigured by labour, degraded by numberless evils, and in whom the eye no longer discovers aught save a sort of movable machine. And if from the body we penetrate to the soul, misery and shame are there revealed under aspects still more profound, which no longer restrain contempt by pity. Pride without cause, ambition, egotism, hatred, lust, every vice contend for mastery over this interior visage of man, and strive to dishonour it. What remains for love? To what vestige of beauty will man have recourse in order to love man and divide fraternally with him the pain of toil and the joy of possessions? . . .

How is it that man loves man to-day, if Catholic doctrine has left man as he was, the same in nature, with its sole attraction? Beauty, we say, is the sole cause of love; it must be then that the Catholic religion has clothed man with a beauty which he had not before. But with what beauty? If I regard you externally, you are not changed; your visage is that of antiquity, and you have even lost something of the regularity of your features. What new beauty then have you received? Ah! a beauty which leaves

you men, and which nevertheless is divine. Jesus Christ has put upon you His own figure, He has touched your soul with His, He has made you one in moral being with Himself. It is no longer you, it is He who lives in you. A saint said: "If we could see the beauty of a soul, we would never again esteem anything else." This beauty which the world sees not, we Christians perceive; it penetrates dishonoured humanity, we feel it, we seek it; it seduces us, not for a day, like human beauty, but with the indelible magic of eternity. If I love you, if I am forced to speak to you, if I would give my life for the salvation of even one of you, it is not because I am more than man; but I see you in an inexpressible brightness which envelops you, penetrates you, and absorbs me into the midst of your being. I possess it myself also to your vision, if you be Christians. A day will come, and that soon, when this voice which announces to you doctrine will be silent; decadence comes rapidly upon man, and with it solitude and oblivion. When that time comes, there will remain of me in your souls nought save the memory of an echo; but to me, as to you, in life and in death, there will remain the beauty which comes from Christ, His likeness which we possess, and the love which springs from it to rejoice us living and to embalm us in the tomb.

You have already some experience of life, you have knocked at more than one door: I ask you, have you not felt the difference between the man who receives you as a man and the man who receives you as a Christian? Besides your mothers, your sisters, and a small number of friends, what indifferent man, however philanthropic, has pressed you to his heart? In what

cabinet, in the privacy of which a philosopher conceals his glorious vigils, have you been received with love? In whom have you recognized the bosom of fraternity? For my part, beside those whom I have just named, I have found it only among Christians, among souls animated by the virtue of Christ, among priests to whom I confessed my sins, among some young people who brought to me the avowal of theirs and who cast themselves joyfully into my arms; fraternal souls, already entwined in the communion of saints, and revealing to me afar off the eternal ecstasy of unity.

And you, men who are but men, I would ask you: What has been your experience of fraternity and human love? Alas! after rapid illusions, you already no longer believe in love; you have even become incredulous regarding beauty, and that source of mysterious joys pours no longer its waters into the depths of your hearts. You have put away from man the God who dwells in him, and you are astonished at the nothingness which remains. . . .

Since human reason, under different colours, has begun to combat and enfeeble Catholic doctrine in the world, what advance has fraternity made? Its name is in every mouth, it is the basis of systems and of desires; we hear nothing spoken of but the spirit of association and community; everywhere the hand of fellowship is held out: and, nevertheless, a profound sigh, an unanimous complaint denounce to the whole earth the coldness of hearts. When I hearken to the man who bears the burthen of military service, to the magistrate devoted to the functions of justice, to the professor revealing to the soul of the young man the secret of his vocation,

to the politician studying closely the mainsprings of life; when, in fine, I hearken to the voice of society issuing from every pore, but one word strikes upon my ear—egotism. Humanity is cold and void. There are heard, even in the midst of political ardour, a mournful sigh, a laboured respiration, which announce externally the misery within. Thus, when the sun declines towards the horizon, the sap of nature ceases to flow and becomes congealed; it would expect death did it not always hope for the resurrection.

The resurrection will come, Christians, and will come through us. As the world, which desires not humility, which desires not chastity, which desires not the apostleship, desires fraternity; as it must desire it, and every day exercises its ingenuity to practise it, there is common ground whereon we may meet the world. Let us profit by it. Between the world and us, the question is who will spread abroad more of real love, who will give more while receiving less. In this conflict, no one can accuse us. Let us fling ourselves into it with generous hearts; we have received so much love that it costs us little to give it. Let us win over our brethren with benefits; and as coldness increases daily in the world, let warmth increase daily in us, to be communicated to the world; that this Lazarus being in the tomb, if he must descend there, we may have sufficient life for him and for ourselves; sufficient tears to weep for him, sufficient power to utter that great cry: "Lazarus, though dead, hear the voice which resuscitates, and come forth from the tomb."—*25th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXXIV

Catholicity and Human Misery

CATHOLIC doctrine has created for human misery a gratuitous service—that is to say, a service of devotedness, without any recompense, save what is strictly necessary, for the person devoted. This service involves of necessity absolute chastity; it has substituted for the family the whole human race. I will not narrate its history: who does not know it? Who does not know with what ingenious fecundity Catholic doctrine has provided fathers and mothers for every woe? Discerning in each age the misery peculiar to it, it has from time to time raised up new servants. It has created the Sister of Charity as easily as it created the Knight of Malta; the Brother of the Christian Schools as well as the Brother of Mercy; the friend of the insane as well as the friend of the leper. Even still each day you have under your eyes the example of its creations, where the power of charity wrestles with the power of misery, and follows on its track even when it touches the most obscure point of humanity.—*Ibid.*

XXXV

The Existence of God

THE certitude regarding God, humanity, and nature is for man a threefold, contemporary, and equal faith. He no more needs to demonstrate to himself the existence of God than he needs to

demonstrate to himself the existence of nature and humanity; and the reasoning which places God in doubt has the same sceptical value against nature and humanity. But we know God more or less, as we know nature and humanity more or less. It is not as regards certitude that times differ, but as regards knowledge; and when God reveals Himself more than before, it is not a higher certitude of Himself that He imparts, but a more extended manifestation of His nature, of His works, and of His personality. If we had not primitively the certitude of God, of nature, and of humanity, inseparably one as it is in its threefold relation, we would never attain to it, because all reality would at once fail beneath our feet. Reasoning may indeed defend and confirm this triple and one certitude, it does not create it. Under all circumstances, however depraved man's will may be, he is in necessary relation with the idea of God; do what he will, the idea of God occurs to him despite of him. It pervades the world; its spectre stands before us, it has eyes, and hands, and a mouth; we may say to it: "No"; we may say to it: "Away;" but in saying to it: "No," we reply to its word; in saying to it: "Away," we reply to its presence. Negation affirms, and repulsion attests. We take the trouble of denying only a thing which exists; we repel only what opens our door wholly or partly, and troubles our repose with an importunate visage. We drive away only what has entered in. And if we deny God, it is because He lives in the world; if we repel Him, it is because He is present; if we drive Him away, it is because He has entered in. And this life, this presence, this entry of God into humanity, prove that He is; for if He be not,

whence this possession of humanity by the idea of Him? I say possession: it is not with this idea as with so many others which appear but to vanish, which a man introduces into the world, and which another banishes from it; ephemeral ideas which have their cradle in a book and their tomb in a library. The idea of God has neither commencement nor end; when we drive it away by the east it returns by the west, or rather it ceases not to inhabit all at once every point of time and space; it is as potent by negation as by affirmation, living by its enemies as by its adorers; more active even, better served, more triumphant when it is attacked than in the days when, undisputed mistress of minds, sister and fellow-citizen of all, it holds uncontested sway.—*26th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXXVI

The Future Religion

EVERY day men announce to us the future religion of humanity; if they cannot create it, they at least prophesy it. They transform impotence into hope. But humanity has not time to wait; it desires God for to-day, and not for to-morrow. It has hungered and thirsted for God during six thousand years; and you, who have come so late, when you put your hand to the work of relieving wants so profound, of satisfying aspirations which ages have not weakened, you are still reduced to prophecies! For my part, I do not believe in anything that does not give to humanity its daily bread. I believe that God has been from the beginning the Father of the soul

as of the body; I believe that the harvests have come, that the rain has fallen; that, in the order of truth, as in the order of nature, man not alone hungers, but that he is filled when he wills it. The bread is ready. God has kneaded it with His own hands; what is wanting is the will to take it such as God has made it. We prefer to prepare it according to our own taste; we ask from reason what it cannot give. Poland showed better judgment when she was dismembered; she said: "God is too high, and France too far off." These words explain the powerlessness of unaided man to place himself in positive commerce with God: God is too high, and reason too far off.—*27th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXXVII

The Saints

THERE is a river wherein all virtues meet, and the river is sanctity. I do not mean ordinary sanctity, which consists in the observance of the divine commandments, and in that conformity of our lives to the Gospel which suffices in order to be saved. I speak of great sanctity, of that which is recognized and venerated here below, which has its altars, and whose magnificent history is contained in that mysterious book which we call the "Lives of the Saints." The lives of the saints! Have you ever thought upon this phenomenon of the lives of the saints? We have heard of the heroes and the sages of antiquity; we read in Plutarch the lives of illustrious men; we see around us virtuous people: but the saints—where can we find anything which

resembles them? Where are the saints of Brahminism, of Polytheism, of Islamism, of Protestantism, of Rationalism? In vain do I seek in these doctrines their name, their appearance, or their counterfeit. During three centuries tha Protestantism has striven to destroy the true Church and to usurp her character, it has numbered among its children good men, and even pious men; but it has not yet ventured to write its legends of saints. As to Rationalism, we need say nothing; it contents itself with having men of wit, and never aspires to have, for example, a Saint Helvetius or a Saint Diderot.

What, then, are the saints—this new privilege which belongs to us? What is sanctity? Sanctity is not alone, as I seemed to intimate just now, the confluence of all the Christian virtues in the same soul; that is but ordinary sanctity, which is necessary for every Christian in order to be saved, and of which I do not now mean to speak. There is no Christian, when he is in a state of union with God, in whom are not found, in a degree more or less perfect, humility, chastity, and charity; we call them pious men; we might even, speaking in a certain sense, call them saints; but this is not what we understand by this great expression, *the saints!* What, then, are the saints? What is sanctity thus understood?

Sanctity is the love of God and men carried to a sublime extravagance. And you will understand that, if there is really a communion of the infinite with the finite, if the heart of God has a habitation and a life in the heart of man, it is impossible that an element so prodigious should not overflow, at least in certain ardent souls, and produce extraordinary effects, which the

infirmity of our nature and of our language compels us to call extravagant. For what is the meaning of this word? It means *going beyond*, or, to use a modern expression, eccentric, save that the word extravagant is a well-constituted word, whereas the word eccentric is badly constituted. The one depicts the action which the other defines geometrically; but a word ought to be a painter, and not a geometrician. Therefore it is that I prefer to use the first; and in this I am far from the energy of St Paul, who has said, without oratorical precautions, that "the world not having been willing to know God by wisdom, it hath pleased God to save the world by the foolishness of preaching." I would not dare to say, even after St Paul, that sanctity is foolishness, because I fear you would say that I was going too far, and I am quite content to show you to-day that I know how to unite the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove; although, to tell you the truth, I quite agree with St Francis of Sales, who said: "My dear Philothea, I would give twenty serpents for one dove."

There is then in sanctity a phenomenon of extravagance, a love of God and man which wounds human sense. But such cannot be the sole characteristic of sanctity; extravagance alone would be but eccentricity, and eccentricity proves nothing in favour of the man who displays it in his actions, except perhaps a good deal of vanity and some bad education. Extravagance ought, therefore, to be corrected in sanctity by another element, and it is so, in effect, by the sublime; that is to say, by moral beauty in its highest degree, by that beauty which transports human sense, so that there is at

one and the same time in sanctity something which wounds human sense and something which transports it, something which produces astonishment and something which produces admiration. And these two things are not separated like two rivers which flow side by side; but the extravagant and the sublime, that which wounds human sense and that which transports it, mingled and blended the one with the other, make of sanctity a single tissue wherein it is impossible for the keenest analytical mind, at the moment when it sees the saint acting, to separate what is extravagant from what is sublime, what is sublime from what is extravagant, what lowers man from what raises him to God. This is sanctity.

I will cite an example, that you may understand me better.

St Elizabeth of Hungary, having abandoned the palace of her fathers and the palace of her husband, shut herself up in a hospital to serve in person the poor of God. A leper presented himself; St Elizabeth received him, and applied herself to wash with her own hands his horrible sores. When she had finished, she took the vessel into which she had expressed what the word of man cannot describe, and swallowed its contents at a draught. That was supremely extravagant. But first remark one thing which you cannot despise: force. Force is the virtue which makes heroes, it is the most efficacious root of the sublime, while it is at the same time most rare. Nothing is so much wanting in man as force, and nothing commands more his respect. You are not wicked beings, but you are feeble beings, and therefore it is that the example of force is the most salutary that can be

given to you, as also it is that which most commands your admiration. St Elizabeth, then, in drinking the water in which the leper had been washed, performed a great action, because she performed an action of force. But there was in it better than force, there was charity. In sanctity, the love of God being inseparable from that of man, since it is nothing else than the excess of this twofold love, it follows that, in every action of the saints, wherein we find sacrifice for God, man shares invariably in the benefit of the sacrifice. And what was the good which resulted to man from the action of St Elizabeth? What was it? Do you ask me? St Elizabeth presented to this abandoned creature, to this object of unanimous repulsion even in the midst of the ages of faith, she presented to him an inexpressible revelation of his greatness; she said to him: "Dear brother of the good God, if, after having washed your wounds, I had taken you in my arms to show you that you are indeed my royal brother in Jesus Christ, it would in itself have been a sign of love and fraternity, but an ordinary sign, the benefit of which I would have only restored to you, to you who from your childhood have been deprived of it, to you who have never felt upon your bosom the bosom of a living soul; but, dear brother, I wish to do for you what has not been done for any king upon earth, for any man who was loved and adored. That which has come forth from you, which is no longer part of you, which was only yours to be transformed into a vile putrescence by its contact with your misery, that will I drink as I drink the blood of the Lord in the holy chalice of our altars." Behold the sublime, and woe to him who comprehends it not! Thanks to St Eliza-

beth it will be known throughout all eternity that a leper has obtained from a daughter of kings more love than beauty has ever won upon earth.

Should a man of genius treat this action as extravagant, we will agree with him; we have said so ourselves; we are persuaded that it is much more natural to drink with one's friends the wine of Château-Margaux. But this man of genius will probably die some day; his writings will perhaps hardly survive him; his joys and his sorrows will be forgotten; and when St Elizabeth dies, kings will contend with the poor over her garments and her memory; a small portion of her body will be valued above treasures; her relics will be enshrined in gold and precious stones; the most famous artists in the world will be invited to raise to her a dwelling in death worthy of her life; and, from age to age, princes, philosophers, poets, mendicants, lepers, pilgrims of all ranks, will hasten to her tomb and imprint there, by the mere touch of their lips, eternal stigmata of love. They will speak to her as to a living being; they will say to her: "Dear sister of the good God, thou hadst palaces and thou didst leave them for us; thou hadst children and thou didst take us for thine; thou wert a high-born lady, and thou didst make thyself our servant; thou didst love the poor, the lowly, and the miserable; thou didst place thy joy in the hearts of those who had no joy; and now we render thee the glory which thou didst give to us; we restore to thee the love which thou didst lose for us. O dear sister! pray for those of thy friends who were not born when thou wert in the world, and whom thou hast since acquired!"

Thus it is with all the extravagances of the saints. All profit humanity, at least by example

If the saint fast, humanity fasts also; if he condemn himself to absurd abstinences, a part of humanity is also famished even to absurdity; if he torture his body by eccentric inventions, there are also in your prisons, in your galleys, in your colonies, human bodies tortured by cruel inventions. If the saint, in a word, impose suffering voluntarily upon himself, who is there, alas! who does not suffer upon earth, and who needs not to learn that God has concealed in suffering a restoring and mysterious balm? Is it a vain service rendered to the human race to reveal to it all its resources against misery, to prove to it, by strange actions if you will, that, no matter what lot may be dealt to it, no matter how it may be dishonoured, no matter what dungeons may be dug for it, there is no punishment, no ignominy, no abjection which may not be transformed by the idea of God, and become a throne to which men will come to venerate and to pray? —*28th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XXXVIII

Extravagance of Catholic Doctrine

When the intelligence of God descends into the intelligence of man, it must necessarily implant there something which can be neither created nor demonstrated by reason. But that which can be neither created nor demonstrated by reason has evidently a character of extravagance, a character which indisputably attaches to Catholic doctrine. What, in effect, does it teach us? One God in three persons, a God who has made the world of nothing, a man who has lost

all his race by a personal sin, a God who became man, who was crucified to expiate crimes for which He was not responsible, a God present under the appearances of bread and wine. What dogmas! and, nevertheless, they are the whole architecture of Catholic doctrine. It is quite evident that reason has created none of these dogmas, and could not unaided demonstrate any of them. And so it ought to be; for if Catholic doctrine were a work of reason, it would not be a superhuman work; if it were a philosophy, it would not be a religion. Instead of dogmas you would have mathematical theorems, and instead of being here * you would be at home, because you would find nothing here which was not at home. You are here because your reason has not made dogmas, because it can neither make them nor demonstrate them, because they are superior to all reason; you are here precisely because I have to say extravagant things to you.

Our adversaries think to frighten us much by merely saying: What you advance is extravagant. I believe it, and what would I have to say to you if I had nothing extravagant to say to you? What would be the use of this religious habit † if I had but to teach you what man, seated at the fireside and poking the embers, may learn unaided? What would be the use of religion or of commerce with God if they left our minds just where they were before? God would be in relation with us and we with Him, for reciprocal satisfaction, the one to give nothing, the other to receive nothing. You see that the supposition has no sense in it, and that we must revert to the famous saying of a certain doctor: "Credo, quia absurdam—I believe it, because it

* In Notre-Dame. † The Dominican habit.

is absurd." The expression is too strong, but it is easy to reduce its exaggeration, and to understand that, in effect, if there were nothing extravagant in doctrine, we would not believe, we would simply see. To believe, there must be something surpassing reason, and what surpasses reason presents to it, evidently, a character of extravagance. Therefore it was that St Paul said: "If any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." *—*Ibid.*

XXXIX

The Sentinels of Freedom

THE ancients said well, that nature abhors a vacuum; they might have said, with still more reason, that she abhors universality—I mean that factitious universality whereby we would subject her to one sceptre and one hand. Space is admirable in this respect. God has furnished it with three kinds of barriers against the ardour of our political and religious invasions. The first is distance. The further the ray departs from the centre, the less becomes its dependence; subjects are obedient a hundred miles away; at a thousand they hardly obey; at three thousand they no longer obey; all ties are relaxed or broken by distance alone. If a momentary unity exists between the metropolis and a colony, time is not slow in striking the hour of enfranchisement. History is full of the warnings which distance ceases not to give to our pride.

But distance is not the only rampart with which nature has armed space against our

* 1 Cor. iii, 18.

enterprises of universality. If distance is the sword of space, configuration is its buckler—a buckler shaped and chiselled by a master-hand. Cast your eyes upon those chains of mountains so artistically disposed for the creation of impregnable frontiers; those burning sands which the dromedary and the camel traverse with difficulty, and which the winds protect from the march of the traveller and the conqueror; those arid and inhospitable steppes where despotism finds no cardinal points whereon to establish itself; those pestilential marshes; those islands hidden in the bosom of the sea, and guarded by their rock-bound coasts; that ice of the poles; those tempests of the ocean; all those thousand obstacles distributed with so much art, and which sixty centuries of effort and exploration have not surmounted.

But these were not sufficient. Climate was added to distance and configuration to constitute the entire globe a defiance to our impotency. The sun has chosen a route which imparts to us his heat with well-calculated avarice and prodigality; a few days' march, a few degrees of latitude passed, and that mighty man—Cyrus, Cambyses—whom you will—can no longer wear his helmet, and removes the armour from his breast! Another day, another march beneath the sun, and that flourishing army, which promised itself the empire of the world, we see it faint away beneath the invisible pressure of the atmosphere; the horseman shades himself beside his horse, the foot soldier lies prostrate upon the earth; they are like a child who has walked an hour too many, and who hangs at his nurse's apron! Look at the favoured fields of Italy; its sky and

ours seem like two brothers born the one but a year before the other; but who has not seen the grief of some child of Italy exiled beneath the clouds of France, which we love so well? In vain the poor proscribed one basks in the rays of our liberty; * his head is bowed by the weight of memories and regrets, as a flower which has been transplanted from a distant land to a soil which it knew not, and which withers, joyless and perfumeless, because it is deprived of the sun, the shade, and the winds of its country.

Thus does space resist our dreams of universality, and all conquerors, one after another, have suffered shipwreck there. When the young Macedonian, after Granicus, Issus, and Arbela, had reached the banks of the Indus, and his impatient heart urged him still further, even to the engraving of his name on the very limit of the universe, his army stopped him. In vain did he conceal himself in his tent, enraged at the vanishing of all his glory; he must needs yield and retreat to Babylon, to die at a banquet, finding no more scope for his power and his ambition. The Romans, that race so persevering in conquests, so indomitable in extending them, and who knew so well how to impart solidity to extent—the Romans encountered the same obstacle. Arrived at the Rhine and the Euphrates, they encountered a barrier which the counsels of their Senate and the agitations of their forum could not overcome. Beyond the Rhine Varus left the bones of his legions; and beyond the Euphrates Crassus paid with his life and his renown for his temerity in crossing it. Other examples are not

* 1845.

wanting, and even our age has seen one most remarkable. Long had the last of the captains bound fate to his will; the Alps and the Pyrenees had trembled beneath his tread; Europe heard in silence the reverberations of his thought, when, weary of a domain wherein glory had exhausted its every resource to gratify him, he pressed on towards the confines of Asia. There his glance wavered, and, for the first time, his eagles turned back. What did he encounter? Was it a general more skilful than himself? No. An army which he had not yet conquered? No. Or rather was it age which had already chilled his genius? No. What, then, did he encounter? He encountered the protector of the weak, the asylum of oppressed peoples, the great defender of human liberty: he encountered space, and all his power crumbled beneath his feet.

If God has created such barriers in the midst of nature, it is because He has had pity on us. He knew what despotism and unhappiness for the human race were involved in violent unity, and He has prepared for us inaccessible retreats in the mountains and in the deserts; He has hollowed out the rock of St Anthony and St Paul, the first hermit; He has formed nests of straw whither the eagle shall not come to snatch the young of the dove. O inaccessible mountains, eternal snows, burning sands, fever-haunted marshes, destructive climates, we thank you for the past, and we hope in you for the future! Yes, you will preserve for us free oases, solitary thebaids, secret paths; you will not cease to protect us against the powerful of this world; you will not permit chemistry to prevail against nature, and to transform the globe, so beautifully moulded by God's hand, into a horrible

and narrow dungeon, where we could breathe nothing freely save smoke, and where sword and fire would be the prime ministers of a pitiless autocracy!—*31st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XL

The Sabbath and the Poor

In the time of Louis XIV one of our most popular poets complained that the Church ruined the poor by festivals. He attacked evangelical right in its most vital part. What has been the result? The great law of rest, the primitive charter of humanity, anterior even to our fall, the law of rest has been sacrificed to the desires of the romancist, and to the figures of the economists. Now, I ask you, is the poor man richer, freer, less enslaved to his masters, in a better condition, happier and more moral? Whom has the abolition of the charter of rest profited, save those who make others work, and who have no need of rest? The poor man will perceive it sooner or later; he will find that in desiring to free him from an evangelical duty they have snatched from him a precious right which was concealed behind; that they have beguiled his purse, his health, his mind, and his heart. He will return to his first Master, Jesus Christ, who understood the rights of the poor, because He was Himself poor; He will again kiss His cross, wet with the tears of those who suffer, and will say to Him, with greater love than that of the past: I come to Thee, who hast never deceived the child of the poor!—*32nd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XLI

The Obligation of Almsgiving

THE inheritance of labour is not sufficient for the poor. The poor child, the poor sick man, the aged poor cannot labour, and too often even the able-bodied poor cannot get work. It behoved Jesus Christ to create for them another inheritance than that of labour. Where was it to be found? Evidently it could not be found save in the proprietorship of the soil; but the proprietorship of the soil belongs to the rich; this right cannot be overthrown without reducing to servitude the whole human race. What resource, then, remains? Jesus Christ has discovered it. He has taught us that proprietorship is not egotistical in its essence, but that it may be in its exercise, and that it is enough to regulate and limit the exercise of it to assure to the poor their part in the common patrimony. The Gospel has laid down this new principle, which was even more unknown than the inalienability of labour. No one has a right to the fruits of his own possessions save according to the measure of his own legitimate wants. God has, in effect, given the earth to man only because of his wants, and in order to provide for them. Any other use made of it is egotistical and parricidal, a gratification of voluptuousness, avarice, and pride, vices condemned by God and which, undoubtedly, He had not willed to pamper and consecrate by instituting property.

It is true that wants differ according to man's social position, a position infinitely variable, and

which the Gospel has recognized in not fixing mathematically the point when lawful use ends and abuse begins. Man would have done this; God has not thought Himself a sufficiently good mathematician to do it, or rather, here, as elsewhere, He has respected our liberty. But the evangelical rule is not the less clear and consistent; where legitimate necessity ceases, the legitimate use of property ceases. What remains is the patrimony of the poor; in justice, as in charity, the rich are but its depositaries and administrators. If egotistical calculations deceive them as to their indebtedness towards the poor, if they escape from it by a luxury increasing with their fortune, by an avarice ever the more uneasy about the future the less cause it has for being so, woe to them! Not in vain is it written in the Gospel, *Woe to you rich!** God will demand of them an account on the day of judgment; the tears of the poor will be shown to them; they will see them in the flashing of vengeance, having been unwilling to see them in the light of justice and charity. If they were the legitimate proprietors of their fortune, they will also be the legitimate proprietors of their damnation.—*33rd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XLII

Love without God

THE love which is merely human is a passing effervescence, produced by causes which in themselves have but little duration; it springs up in the morning and withers in the evening. It is

* Luke vi, 24.

not the act of a man who is master of himself, confident in his will, and bringing the energy of duty into the innermost joys of the heart. True love is a virtue, it supposes a soul constant and strong, which, without being insensible to fugitive gifts, penetrates to the immutable region of the beautiful, and discovers even amid ruins an efflorescence which charms and wins it. But the Christian soul alone has this creative affection; others stop short at the surface, and see death everywhere. Two young people approach the altar for that beautiful ceremony of marriage; they bring with them all the joy and all the sincerity of their youth; they vow an eternal love. But soon joy diminishes, fidelity is shaken, the eternity of their promises disappears by degrees. What has happened? Nothing; hour has followed hour; they are what they were, save a few months older. But an hour is much without God. God did not enter into their vows, He had no part in their love, and their love came to an end because God alone never ends.—*34th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XLIII

The Trappists

HE says there are those amongst his audience who have visited some communities of la Trappe, and continues:

I ASK them to say what have been their feelings on seeing that assembly of men, so different in their origin, their age, their history, their memories: this man having on his visage the scar of battles; that, with a brow illumined by

the splendour of thought; that other, with the ineffaced furrow of conquered love; another, with laborious hands accustomed to hard toil, who, finding the plough near the altar, does not doubt that it may be called a triumphal plough with more justice than that of the Roman consul: all these lives, in fine, so unequal by birth and by circumstances, which are now merged in the divine equality of a similar destiny even unto unto death. This spectacle has appealed to the heart of all those who have seen it; no one, however little his belief in God, has refused to this work of His right hand a moment of faith and admiration. How, indeed, could it be resisted, and what more can you justly desire? What more for the man who breathes the egotism of the world, and who, even in the family, amid interests the most holy, has found concentration in himself and the exclusion of others? What more than to find men superior to personality, devoting their whole being for a little bread which is given them each day, and, though they be princes by intellect or by birth, making themselves lovingly the least and the last amongst their brethren? Let men say what they will from outside against such an institution, no one can knock at their door to get a nearer view without returning more discontented with himself, and without having learned something of God and man which will make him think more than once. —*36th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XLIV

The Services of the Religious Orders

THERE are here below five gratuitous and popular services, without which the people, or, if you prefer a more evangelical expression, without which the poor are necessarily miserable; and these gratuitous and popular services have been created by the religious orders, who alone are in a position to render them.

The first of all is the gratuitous and popular service of suffering. You will say to me: What is the gratuitous and popular service of suffering? It is easy to tell you. Whatever may be the reason—I seek not for it at this moment—a great weight of sorrow presses upon the human race. During six thousand years, as there has fallen a certain quantity of rain each year, so there has fallen from the heart of man a certain quantity of tears. Man has tried every expedient to escape this law; he has passed through many different states, from the extreme of barbarism to the extreme of civilization; he has lived under sceptres of every form and of every weight; but everywhere and always he has wept, and when we read his history attentively, we find that sorrow is the first and the last word. He changes sometimes its form, at the most, but he changes not its nature or its quantity. Jesus Christ Himself, He who effected the greatest revolution in sorrow—Jesus Christ has not diminished it much essentially; He bore His part in it, and has transformed without destroying it. Do then what you will, think of it what you please

be rich, powerful, clever, immortal, happy in fine: I will assume that you are all this, but know that, from your cradle to your grave, you move in a vast system of sorrow where, if you be spared, sorrow is mistress and inflicts blows on others which she disdains to inflict upon you. Wherever and for whatever reason this may be written, it is written, and apparently by a hand which keeps to its work. O you, then, O you happy ones of earth! condemned but overlooked by the executioner, suffer that there be here below a gratuitous and popular service of suffering, that is to say, men who are willing to take more than their natural share of it, in order to diminish the part which others would have to bear, to diminish—to speak in a catholic sense—by the principle of solidarity. Yes, the principle of solidarity! I will show you some time that every man who suffers voluntarily in the world lessens the suffering of some one else, that every one who fasts gives bread to another who needs it, that every man who weeps at the feet of Jesus Christ uplifts from the heart of a creature whom he knows not, but who will be revealed to him in God, a certain quantity of grief; and that by the principle of solidarity, which so works that, when there is a little more sorrow in a soul, there is a little less in another, as when it rains much in one country it rains less in the neighbouring region, the moral order being regulated like the physical order, by the same power, the same wisdom, the same justice, the same distribution.

But perhaps you do not understand me: solidarity is a mystery which revolts you or which is unknown to you: well and good! I will be silent regarding it the more willingly that I do not need it; for if I cannot invoke before you

the principle of the diminution of pain by solidarity, I can at least speak to you without fear of the diminution which takes place by means of sympathy. It is certain that, seeing others suffer voluntarily, we regard grief more firmly and more fearlessly. It is certain that a poor man who asks for food at the door of a monastery, and who is served by a man clothed like himself in coarse garments, and walking with naked feet, receives a revelation of poverty which changes it in his eyes, and brings to his heart a balm which no other spectacle can impart.

Permit then this first gratuitous and popular service; permit some foolish folk to sacrifice themselves for you, if you are unhappy; to sacrifice themselves for you even if you are happy, for you will not be so to-morrow, and, if you were so always, you would need that the poor, who are ever doing penance, should pardon you your happiness. Let the fanatics console them in their misery; let them walk with naked feet, that the poor may see that one can get along bare-footed, as our ancestors said, without losing dignity and joy, and that their searching gaze, interrogating by turns the interior and the exterior, may see the peace of God imprinted on the brow of the mendicant.

The second gratuitous and popular service which the poor need is the gratuitous and popular service of truth. You have, I hope, truth in your books and in your academies, in the minds of your decorated and endowed professors; but down below? Who will carry truth down below? Who will make it descend to the people, who are children of God as you are, and whom their leisure permits to see it but as one sees the sun, coming to him in the morning? Who will distribute the

light of intelligence to the poor souls of the fields, so inclined to stoop to the earth, like their bodies, and keep them erect before the august face of the true, the beautiful, the holy, of all that ravishes the heart of man and gives him courage to live? Who will go to find my brother of the people through love of him, with conscious disinterestedness, for the sole pleasure of discussing with him the truth, of speaking simply of God between the toil of to-day and that of to-morrow? Who will bring to him, not a dead book, but the thing without price, a living faith, a word from the soul, a teaching full of God, the faith, the soul, and God, all saying to him together: "Look at me—me, a man like yourself; I have studied, I have read, I have meditated for you who could not do so, and I bring you knowledge. Seek not afar off for demonstration; you see it in my life; love gives you its word, which is truth!"

Who can, who will dare speak thus to the people, if not the apostle of the people, the Capuchin, with his cord and his naked feet? The Church, in her fecundity, prepared mouths of gold for the poor as well as for kings; she taught her envoys the eloquence of the cottage as well as the eloquence of courts. To-day the apostolic pulpit is mute for the poor; in our remote country places thousands of French people have never once, within forty years, heard the thunders of the truth.* They have their parish priest, you will say; yes, I admit it, they have a worthy representative of religion, a faithful pastor, the beautiful spectacle of simple and daily virtue—it is much. But the word does not equal the authority of the pastor; time alone will wound it to death, in taking from it the charm of

* This was spoken in 1845.

novelty. If you need accents which you have not heard before, you, man of cities, they are also necessary for the man of the fields. The poor man needs, like you, the raptures of the word ; he has affections to be moved, places in his heart where truth sleeps, and where eloquence must surprise it and awake it with a sudden awakening. Let him hear Demosthenes, and the Demosthenes of the people is the Capuchin.

Another service of the same nature, namely, the gratuitous and popular service of education, is akin to and united with the gratuitous and popular service of truth. The child of the poor man is as sacred as the child of the rich. His nature is as rebellious, his lot harder, his means of culture and good breeding much less multiplied. Soon the labour of the body will remove him from the exercises of the intelligence, and if he have not received the precious germs of good with an authority which has penetrated his heart, he will quickly lose the character of a Christian and civilized man to live in a degradation which nothing can disguise. Every vice will take possession of his being with a frightful heedlessness of the things of the soul, and society will find in the people, who ought to be the permanent source of its renewal and its vigour, but an element corrupted by the most abject materialism. The tutor of the people, a tutor worthy of them, is then one of the primary necessities of social order. But who will be this tutor ? Who can unite at the same time, in so great an office, sufficient learning, pure morals, sincere faith, authority worthy of respect, and in fine a life so modest that the poor may sustain it in exchange for the lessons which they receive. The Church

has supplied the want by the teaching orders, as she has provided for the gratuitous and popular service of truth by the apostolic orders, for the gratuitous and popular service of suffering by the penitent orders. The Brother of the Christian schools and of all the other similar institutes gives to the poor an education which costs them nothing, or very little, and which is worthy of a child of the fatherland as of a child of God.

On this subject I can speak with more gratification than I have spoken on other similar subjects. France has authentically accepted the devotedness of the brothers and the sisters vowed to the instruction of the people; a popularity which is the first recompense of their labours, protects them throughout the country as well as the empire of the laws. What I say then on the subject is not an accusation; it is an expression of thanks and blessing.*

But we have not done with the wants of the poor; after the services of suffering, of truth, and of education, they require the gratuitous and popular service of sickness and of death. It is said that one third of the inhabitants of this great city† die in the hospitals. Let us suppose that it is but a fourth. What a figure! Of a million of men, more than two hundred thousand must die away from their wives and their children, away from their families, within strange walls which speak not to the heart save of distress and abandonment. Whom will the sick and dying poor find there, if they find not the Brother of St John of God and the Sister of Charity? Mercenaries, hired servants. I desire to respect them, and I

* The twentieth century has opened with the Law of Associations, which forms a sad commentary upon this passage.

† Paris.

do respect them everywhere. But there! do they suffice for the sacred hour of the death of the poor? Is it at forty sous a day that we value those who are to close the eyes of two hundred thousand men in our midst? I say in our midst, for the poor are ours. But do not deceive yourselves, for in another sense, in the midst of yourselves, there are those who will die in the hospital, and perhaps I myself will also die there. We live in times sufficiently charged with vicissitudes to make us anxious as to our last moments. Well, you may die there; fatality—an expression which is not Christian—but yet, fatality may bring you there, and therefore hearken to me: your life is passing away; it is perhaps not of much consequence, but it will have one great moment, the moment of death, the moment of appearing before God. Do you think of it? Here is a man who says to himself: "In an instant, I will see eternity!" Whether he believe orbelieve not, it is a great abyss! "To be or not to be"—says a tragic writer—"that is the question!" What a question! What a question for a man alone, abandoned in a hospital, face to face with his conscience, face to face with God, who writes perhaps with His finger his condemnation upon the wall, as for Balthasar!

Ah! let love approach him, since there is upon earth a love which costs nothing; let there come to him a loving representative of God. Why kill love, because it is Jesus Christ who has made it gratis? To persecute the Sister of the hospitals is to persecute the death of the poor, it is to condemn to the Gemoniæ,* as a reward for their sweat, a portion of humanity, and perhaps

* Gemoniæ Scalæ, the Stairs of Sighs, whence the condemned were cast into the Tiber.

yourselves also. It may be that, in pleading this cause of the death of the poor, I plead also the cause of your last hour, of your last thought, of your last breath. It is a thing to consider.

Another gratuitous and popular service is the gratuitous and popular service of blood. Europe has not always had regular armies as it has to-day. There was a time when each nation had but the swords of its gentlemen and of hired troops who were disbanded after war. The disorders inseparable from this kind of life were great, and the people suffered much from them. The Church tried to remedy them, and to provide also for the defence of Christianity menaced by Islamism, by instituting those famous military orders, such as the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, the Knights Templars, the Teutonic Knights, and others of less renown. To unite the monastic life with the life of camps, to exalt the sacrifice of blood by good morals and piety, to pass from the sanctuary to the combat: such was the heroic thought which created the new institute, and which is consecrated in history by pages which time will never efface. We may indeed believe that our regiments equal the sacred cohorts of Christian chivalry; but let us not forget the times of the Crusades, the defence of Rhodes against Mahomet II and Solyman II, John de la Valette defeating finally, under the walls of Malta, the forces of the Ottoman Empire, and all the glory achieved by our chivalry, and which has been handed down to us through the ages.

Perhaps even it would not be very difficult to prove to you that in these our days the gratuitous and popular service of blood would be a good

and admirable institution. But time presses. Let us say only that if the present time does not call for the help of Christian chivalry, the days may come when the peoples will not disdain its resurrection. Yes; days may come when, as a defence against the invasion of barbarism, the ordinary sword will not suffice; when science distanced in its own inventions, will need faith and charity to save the honour and liberty of the world by arms which the enemy will not possess, all others, which require but chemistry and efficient hands, being at his service. Sooner or later perhaps, evil will prevail by physical power, and then must good, with strength renewed at other sources, uplift the cross as high as the sword —*Ibid.*

XLV

He opens the Conferences on Jesus Christ

LORD JESUS, during the ten years in which I have spoken of Thy Church to this audience it has been in reality of Thee that I spoke but at length on this day I come more immediately to Thyself, to the divine figure which is every day the object of my contemplation, to Thy sacred feet which I have so often kissed, to Thy loving hands which have so often blessed me, to Thy head crowned with glory and with thorns, to the life of which I breathed the perfume from my birth, which my adolescence slighted, to which my youth returned, and which my manhood adores and announces to every creature. O Father! O Master! O Friend! O Jesus! aid me more than ever, since, being nearer to Thee, it is meet that men perceive in

and that my tongue utter words which may bear the impress of Thy sacred presence!—*37th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XLVI

Two Testimonies

WHILE the eighteenth century outraged at its pleasure the Son of God, there was, in a college which attacked Him, a man * as unbelieving as the others who were there, a man as celebrated as the others—more celebrated than all, one only excepted, and who, more than they, had the privilege of being sincere in his impulses. God willed it thus, in order that His name should not be left without a testimony even among those who laboured to destroy His reign. This man, then at the summit of his glory, made acquainted by study with past ages, and by his life with the age of which he was an ornament, had occasion to speak of Jesus Christ in a profession of faith wherein he desired to summarize every doubt and certainty which his meditations upon religious subjects had left in his mind. After treating of God in a worthy, although confused manner, he comes to the Gospel and Jesus Christ. Here this soul, wavering between error and truth, loses suddenly his hesitation, and with a hand firm as that of a martyr, forgetting his time and himself, the philosopher writes the page of a theologian, a page that ought to be a counterpoise of that blasphemy, "Crush the infamous being," and which terminates in those words with which every temple of Christianity

* Rousseau.

will re-echo until the last coming of Christ: "If the life and the death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and the death of Jesus were those of a God."

We might suppose that the force of this confession could not be surpassed, when we consider the genius of the man who wrote it, the authority of his unbelief, the glory of his name and the circumstances of the age which was condemned to witness it. We would deceive ourselves. Another man, another eloquence, another glory, another form of unbelief, another age another avowal are to be found; and greater in all, if not in each taken separately, than the man, the eloquence, the glory, the unbelief the age, and the avowal of which you have just heard. Our century opened with a man who surpassed all his contemporaries, and whom we, who have come after him, have not equalled. A conqueror, a legislator, a founder of empire, his name and his thoughts still pervade the world. After having accomplished the work of God without believing in it, he disappeared, setting like a star which is extinguished in the deep waters of the Atlantic. There, upon a rock, he loved to recall his own life, and thence passing on to that of others with whom he had a right to compare himself, he could not avoid noticing, upon the great stage where he had played a part, a figure greater than his. He regarded it frequently misfortune opens the soul to lights which prosperity discerns not. The figure returned continually; he was constrained to pass judgment on it. One evening during that long exile which expiated the faults of the past and illumined the way of the future, the fallen conqueror inquired of one of the few companions of his captivity

whether he could tell him what was Jesus Christ. The soldier excused himself; he had had too much to do since he came into the world to occupy himself with such questions. "What!" exclaimed his interlocutor, much moved; "you have been baptized in the Catholic Church, and you cannot tell me, me, upon this rock which is wasting away our lives, what was Jesus Christ! Well, I will tell you." And then opening the Gospel, not with the hand, but with a heart which was filled with it, he compared Jesus Christ with himself and all the greatest men of history; he explained the characteristics which distinguished Jesus Christ from all humanity, and, after a torrent of eloquence which no father of the Church would have disavowed, he concluded thus: "In fine, I know men, and I say to you that Jesus Christ was not a man!"

The day will come when France will engrave these words upon the tomb of her great captain, and they will shine with a more immortal splendour than the sun of the Pyramids and Austerlitz!—*Ibid.*

XLVII

The Continuance of Miracles

If Jesus Christ wrought miracles during His life, and even during the first ages of His Church, why does He work them no longer? Why does He not continue to work them? Alas! He still works them every day, but you see them not. He works them with less prodigality, because the moral and social miracle, the miracle which needed time, is accomplished and before our eyes. When Jesus Christ laid the foundations of

His Church, it was necessary for Him to obtain faith in a work which had yet been only commenced. To-day it is built, although not yet completed. You see it, you touch it, you compare it, you measure it, you judge whether it is a human work. Why, then, should God lavish miracles on those who see not this miracle? Why, for example, should I lead you to the mountains of the Tyrol to see prodigies which a hundred thousand of our contemporaries have seen there during fifteen years? Why should I procure a stone from the quarry when the Church is built? The monument of God is standing; every power has attacked it; every science has scrutinized it; every blasphemy has cursed it; look at it, it is there. During eighteen centuries it has been suspended between heaven and earth, as Count de Maistre said. If you see it not, what will you see? In a celebrated parable, Jesus Christ speaks of a wicked rich man saying to Abraham: "Send to my brethren somebody from the dead." And Abraham replies: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead."* The Church is Moses, the Church is all the prophets, the Church is the living miracle: how can he, who does not see the living, see the dead?—*38th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

* Luke xvi, 31.

XLVIII

Man's Affections

No sooner does the flower of affection bud forth in us, than we seek in the companions of our adolescence sympathies which possess themselves of our heart, and attract it from its cherished yet sad solitude. Hence, in the history of every generous life, those first fervours of friendship, those memories which will never be effaced, and which, even in old age, will bring to the soul a perfume of the past. Nevertheless, despite the strength of these early ties, the mere course of years relaxes them; our eyes, as they grow stronger, become less sensible of the attractions of our age; something which is no longer of childhood delivers us from this first charm, which no other, mayhap, will equal, but which suffices for us no longer. Friendship settles down into a grave and equable confidence, and our soul, having ascended a degree upon the cycle of life, needs a new affection, which subjugates while filling it. Shall I name it? And why should I not? There are two things before which, with the aid of God, I will never recoil: duty and necessity. It is necessary for my discourse that I pronounce the name, too often profaned, of the second sentiment of man. I pronounce it then, and I say: For man, gravitating from adolescence towards maturity, there is necessary an attachment which may satisfy at once his youth and his manhood, his need of renewal and of existence in the future. God has prepared for him love, which ought, if it be true

—that is to say, pure—to complete the education of his life, and render him worthy of having a posterity. But, O feebleness of our nature! soon the cares of virility furrow his brow; the lines upon it bear an honourable testimony to thought: what more is necessary? Incapable of obtaining henceforth the reciprocity of an intoxication already sobered in us, and which has no longer sufficient illusion for its sustenance, we repose in an attachment more calm, more serene, still sweet, but which does not merit comparison with the absorption of the passion which I have just named by its proper name.

Yet the resources of the human soul are not exhausted; daughter of eternal love, the spirit of her origin will inspire her to the end. With the first shadows of old age the sentiment of paternity descends into our hearts and takes possession of the void which preceding affections have left there. Do not think it is a decadence. Since the smile of God first beamed upon the world nothing has been more beautiful than the smile of the old man upon the child; a smile so pure, so tender, so disinterested, and which indicates in our lives the attainment of our highest perfection and of our most perfect similitude to God. The body droops with age, and perhaps the mind, but not the soul, whereby we love. Paternity is as superior to love as love itself is superior to friendship. Paternity crowns life. It would be love, stainless and in its plenitude, if the child made to the father the equal return which friend renders unto friend, and the wife unto the husband. But it is not so. When we were children we were loved more than we loved; and, having become old, we in our turn love more than we are loved. You should not com-

plain of this. Your children go the road that you have gone yourselves, the road of friendship, the road of love, ardent ways which permit them not to recompense that passion of grey hairs which we call paternity. It is the honour of man to find in his children the ingratitude which he exhibited towards his own parents, and thus to conclude, like God, by a disinterested sentiment.

It is not less true that, although pursuing love all our lives, we succeed in obtaining it but imperfectly, and this makes our hearts bleed. But supposing that we obtain it while living, what remains of it after death? It may be that the prayer of a friend will follow us beyond this world, or that a fond recollection will still pronounce our names; but soon heaven and earth have advanced, forgetfulness descends, silence envelopes us, no longer does any shore send forth over our tombs the ethereal breeze of love. It is ended, it is for ever ended, and such is the history of man's love.—*39th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XLIX

The Old Testament

THE greater the thought, the greater is the monument which it erects exteriorly for itself, and by which it subsists even after it has perished in the intelligence which conceived it. The monument of Hebrew thought is a book which constitutes a part of the Book *par excellence*, a book which serves as a preface to the Gospel, and which, in this illustrious companionship, is venerated as the perfect pedestal of a faultless statue. As a history, the Hebrew Bible takes precedence of all other histories by

reason of the antiquity, the continuity, and the authenticity of its narration; it alone ascends to the cradle of the human race, and lays the first stone of the whole edifice of the past. As a juridical monument it has no equal in any of the collections which contain the laws of great peoples. In the domain of moral philosophy it opposes its books of wisdom to all the maxims of the most renowned sages, and we find in these books a presence of God which raises the soul above the ordinary range of reason. In that of poetry it contains the songs of David and the prophets, which are repeated after two or three thousand years by all the echoes of the Christian world, and are the creators of a language which has infiltrated every human language to praise and bless God. Other peoples have had historians, jurisconsults, sages, and poets, but they are theirs alone, and form as it were a private glory. The Jewish people has been the historian, the jurisconsult, the sage, and the poet of humanity.—*41st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

L

Jesus Christ

JESUS CHRIST appears to us as the motive power of the past as well as the motive power of the future; the soul of times anterior to Him as well as the soul of times posterior to Him. He appears to us in His ancestors, resting on the Jewish people, which is the grandest monument, social and religious, of ancient times; and in His posterity, resting on the Catholic Church, which is the grandest work, social and religious,

of latter times. He appears to us, holding in His left hand the Old Testament, the greatest book of the times which preceded Him, and holding in His right hand the Gospel, the greatest book of the times which have succeeded Him. And nevertheless, thus preceded and thus succeeded, He is still greater in Himself than His ancestors and His posterity, than the patriarchs and the prophets, than the apostles and the martyrs. Supported by all that has been the most illustrious before and after Him, His personality still stands forth upon this sublime background and reveals to us, in surpassing what appears to be above all, the God who has no model and who has no equal. Therefore, in presence of this triple mark of the divinity, before, during, and after, in ancestry, in posterity, and during life itself, let us arise; let us all arise together, whatever we may be, believers or unbelievers. Let us who are believers arise with respect, admiration, faith, and love for a God who has revealed Himself to us with such abundant evidence, and who has chosen us from among men, to make us the depositaries of the splendour of His truth! And we, who believe not, let us also arise, but with fear and anxiety, as men who are very little with their power and their reasoning, in the presence of facts which fill all ages, and which are themselves so full of the empire and the majesty of God!—*Ibid.*

LI

History

MAN lives in time, that is to say, in a singular element, which is the cause both of his life and of his death; he advances between a past which is no more and a future which is not yet, and if he had not the faculty of uniting within him these three phases of his existence, he would be born incessantly without ever attaining to the possession of life. For hardly would he advance a step when forgetfulness would blot out the trace of it, and he would ever be to himself as a shadow which is cast upon the ground and then disappears. Against this terrible power of time God has given him memory, whereby man lives in what is no more, as well as in what is present, so that, recalling each hour, when he wills it, the days which have passed, he sees himself in the plenitude of his personality, like to an edifice whose courses have been successively laid, but which the eye sees at a glance in its entirety. But the memory which suffices to enable a man to live, suffices not for humanity; while a man has a memory which lasts as long as himself, humanity is multiple, and its memory expires with each generation, or at least it transmits but a small portion of it to the generation which follows. The father relates to his son what he has seen, the son repeats it to the grandson; but with each descent the tradition becomes more obscure, and in time its light illumines only the distant summits of the greatest events. Finally it is defaced; the

lines become confused in the eyes of a posterity which is ever becoming more remote, and if God did not intervene to bring succour to the human race losing the trace of itself, we should see it settle down in an eternal childhood between a shapeless past and an unknown future. Experience, the source of all progress, would be constantly wanting to it. Neither truth nor error, neither good nor evil, would be known, save through a puerile contest always recommencing at the same point; a spectacle unworthy of man, unworthy of God, wherein truth and good, having open to them no career so great as themselves, could never display their characteristics of stability and immortality. God, who provided by memory for the progressive identity of man, would, it is evident, provide for the continuous perpetuity of the human race by a memory conformable to the destinies of so vast a body, that is to say, by a memory, one, universal, certain, capable of imparting to it a complete apprehension of its works from the commencement to the end. Thus I define history:

History is the life of humanity present to itself, as our individual life is present to each of us; history is the memory of the world.—*42nd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LII

"This Child is set for a sign which shall be contradicted"

LET us examine why it is that Jesus Christ contradicts all, and is contradicted by all and in every place, and often even by those who have

His faith, who belong to His Church, who eat His flesh and drink His blood. The cause is not in the region of the intellect; rationalism is deceived in seeking there the explanation of this Christian mystery. Jesus Christ goes beyond the intelligence; He reaches to the very soul, which is the centre of all, to demand of it the sacrifice of its dearest inclinations, to convert it from evil to good, from pride to humility, from lust to chastity, from pleasure to mortification, from egotism to charity, from corruption to sanctity. And man opposes to this enterprise a desperate resistance; he arms against Jesus Christ his reason, his heart, the world, the human race, earth and heaven; and even when vanquished by the sentiment of his misery, and by his experience of the sweetness of the Gospel yoke, he still feels within him to his last hour a possibility of revolt and a lingering desire for it. This is the whole secret. And if you wish to comprehend the difficulty of the triumph of Jesus Christ, I will not propose to you to convert the world—no, but only one man. I ask you, princes of nations, you who command by genius, or riches, or power, I ask you to make one man humble and chaste, a penitent, a soul who judges his pride and his senses, who despises himself, who hates himself, who fights against himself, and whether as a proof or a means of his conversion, avows at your feet the errors of his life. I ask of you but this. Can you do it? Have you ever done it? Ah! let a king call you into his cabinet, radiant with the majesty of the throne, and press you to avow your faults at his feet; you will say to him: But, Sire, I would rather confess to the shoemaker who makes my shoes. Let the most celebrated philosopher of the age

employ all his eloquence to persuade you to kneel at his feet and become his penitent, you would not even take the trouble of turning on your heel to laugh in his face. Pardon me these expressions; they would be unbecoming on other occasions, but here they are just and grave.

And nevertheless, what kings, philosophers, and nations could not effect, a poor priest, an unknown man, the most obscure of men accomplishes every day in the name of Jesus Christ. He sees souls, impelled by their misery, come to seek him, him who knows them not, and to avow ingenuously their shameful passions. This is the door whereby we approach Jesus Christ to rest in Him, whereby the Church herself enters; for the Church is but the penitent world, and this one word explains to you the whole miracle of her foundation and her perpetuity, as well as the power of active and passive contradiction which is in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ contradicts all minds, because His doctrine is holy and the world is corrupt; He contradicts all nations, because His Church is holy and the world is corrupt; and, for the same reason, the world contradicts the doctrines, the spirit, and the Church of Jesus Christ.—*44th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LIII

Doctrine

DOCTRINE is the science of destinies. We live, but wherefore? We live, but how? We and all that is external to us move with a movement which never ceases. The sky changes, the earth is borne onward, the waves succeed one another

on the ancient shores of the sea, the plant germinates, the tree grows, the dust is agitated, and the spirit of man, still more restless than nature, gives itself no repose. Wherefore is this? What does it mean? All movement supposes a point of departure, a term whither it tends, a road whereby it passes. What is then our point of departure, what our term, what our road? It is for doctrine to reply; it is for it to tell us of our origin, our end, our means, and to reveal to us with them the secret of our destinies. Science does not do this. The inferior sciences teach us the law of particular movements: how bodies attract and repel one another; what orbit they follow in the infinite space of the universe; how they are decomposed and reconstituted; and a thousand secrets of the agitated yet constant life which they live in the fruitful bosom of nature; but these sciences tell us not of the general law of motion, the primary origin of all, the last end of all, the means common to all. It is the privilege of doctrine, as much elevated above all the sciences as the universal is above the particular.—*45th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LIV

The Popularity of God

GOD is here below the most popular of all beings. In the midst of the fields, leaning upon his spade, the labourer raises his eyes towards heaven, and he speaks of God to his children by an impulse simple as his soul. The poor call upon Him, the dying invoke Him, the perverse fear Him, the good man blesses Him,

kings give Him their crowns to bear, armies place Him at the head of their battalions, victory gives Him thanks, defeat seeks in Him succour, the peoples arm themselves with Him against their tyrants; there is not a place, a time, an occasion, a sentiment wherein God does not appear and may not be named. Love itself, so sure of its charm, so confident in its own immortality, dares not, nevertheless, dispense with Him, and it comes to the foot of His altars to ask of Him the confirmation of the promises it has so often solemnly made. Anger believes that it does not attain its supreme expression until it outrages His adorable name, and blasphemy is the homage of a faith which reveals itself while it is being forgotten. What shall I say of perjury? Here is a man who is in possession of a secret whereon depends his fortune, his honour; he alone knows it upon earth, he alone is his judge. But truth has an eternal auxiliary in God; she calls God to her succour, she places the heart of man in presence of an oath, and even he who is capable of violating its majesty will not do so without that trembling of the soul which precedes the basest and most atrocious actions. And, nevertheless, what is there in this word, "I swear"? Nothing but a name, it is true; but it is the name of God. It is the name which all peoples have adored, to which they have built temples, consecrated priesthoods, addressed prayers; it is a name the greatest, the most holy, the most efficacious, the most popular which the lips of man have received the grace to pronounce.—*Ibid.*

LV

The Will

THE will is the seat of power; by it man commands, and by it he is obeyed. To command! What a word! Have you ever dwelt upon it? A man drops a word from his lips; it is heard and the hearer hastens to obey. Another speaks: nothing is done. The two have essayed to command; one only has succeeded. It is because one only has spoken the word which contains power, the word, *I will*. Many think they say it because they pronounce it; but few there are who say it with effect. It is the rarest word in the world, although it is the most frequently usurped; and when a man has the terrible secret of it, even though he is poor and the last of all, be assured that one day you will find him higher than you. Such was Cæsar.—*47th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LVI

Kindness

THERE is a thing more generous than interest, more elevated than duty, more potent than love. Search your heart, and if you find it difficult to understand me, if your own gifts are unknown to you, hear Bossuet speaking of you: "When God," he says, "made the heart of man, His first gift to it was kindness." It was a divine thought, and had Bossuet conceived no other, I would regard him as a great man. Kindness! That is to say,

the virtue which consults not interest, which awaits not the command of duty, which needs not to be solicited by the attraction of beauty, but which inclines the more towards an object the poorer it is, the more miserable, the more abandoned, the more deserving of contempt. It is true, it is true, man possesses this adorable faculty—I claim it in the name of man. It is not genius, nor glory, nor love which measures the elevation of his soul: it is kindness. It is this which imparts to the human physiognomy its first and most invincible charm; it is this which attracts us the one to the other; it is this which creates a communion between the goods and the ills of life, and which is everywhere, from heaven to earth, the grand reconciler of beings. See at the foot of the Alps that wretched idiot without eyes, without a smile, without tears, who knows not even his degradation, and who seems to be an effort of nature to debase herself in the dishonour of her greatest production; think not that he has not found the way to any heart, and that his ignominy has cut him off from the friendship of the universe. No; he is loved; he has a mother; he has brothers and sisters; he has a place at the fireside of the cabin; he has the best and most sacred place, because he is the most completely disinherited. The bosom which nourished him affords him still a place of repose, and the superstition of love speaks of him only as a benediction sent by God. Such is man!—*Ibid.*

LVII

The Creation of the Lost

You remind me of a thought which for a long time tormented the adolescence of my reason. You say to me: If all of us, free and intelligent creatures, attained the life of eternity, it is certain that the miseries of the present life would vanish from our minds, not being worthy, as St Paul says, "to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us."* But such will not be the case. Catholic doctrine teaches us that a portion of created intelligences do not attain the kingdom of heaven, and that thus creation, instead of conducing to their happiness, leads finally to their eternal misery. It is true that this is their own fault, but what then? God knew it, God foresaw it. Was it an act of goodness to place in the world beings whom an infallible prescience saw excluded, whether through their fault or not, from the benefit of their primitive vocation, and condemned to a loss equal to the good which was destined for them? If God, in creating, meant to act only in virtue of His sovereignty, by an act of power and will, one would conceive perhaps that He took no account of the result, and that the final misery of some of His creatures, caused by their prevarication, would have appeared to Him only an accident, incapable of disarming the right and the efficacy of His will. But you tell us that the supreme *fiat* was pronounced through goodness, through the desire of communicating life

* Romans viii, 18.

and glory to possible beings whom God discovered on the horizon of His thought. This end and this motive, are they compatible with the eternal woe of lost intelligences? We admit, indeed, that Catholic doctrine does not teach as an article of faith that it is the smaller proportion of men who will be saved. Still less does it teach that, of the totality of intelligent hierarchies, it is the minority who will maintain their titles in presence of God's justice. But what of that? Were there but one man, but one spirit, disinherited from the true life and condemned for ever, it would be sufficient to accuse the divine goodness, or at least to prevent our attributing to it the creation of the universe. Seek, then, another cause in the omnipotence of God; say that He did what He willed because He willed it, that He was the master, that crime and ingratitude could not deprive Him of His rights as sovereign; we will then, perhaps, understand you. But in presence of the terrible reality of eternal damnation, speak not of the goodness of God; let us tremble beneath His justice, and be silent before His impenetrable majesty.

I will not be silent, for what you have just said suffices to answer you. You admit that, if the creative power enters into the attributes which constitute the divine essence, it is impossible that God can be despoiled of it by the evil will of His creature. To say, in effect, that God has not the right to create a being who will abuse His gifts, is to say that the wicked can annihilate God by preventing the exercise of one of His essential attributes. What more vain and absurd? Now this being settled, the difficulty falls of itself. Even when God acts through

goodness, He acts in the indivisible totality of His essence; He acts with His power, His wisdom, His justice, and the whole inalienable assemblage of His perfections. It is goodness which moves Him, but a goodness which abdicates none of the rest of His divinity. His goodness cannot prevent His being wise, and just, and powerful, and sovereign; and if He discover by His prescience a creature so ungrateful as to turn His gifts against Himself, He will not deprive that creature of the benefit, for this would be to deprive Himself at the same time of the power of creating on equitable conditions, which would be inconsistent with His attributes, and which He could do only by ceasing to exist. You will say, perhaps: Power is one thing, the exercise of it another; God cannot lose His power, but He is free not to exercise it. Most certainly; but understand that whoever is free not to exercise a power is free also to exercise it, under pain of forfeiting it. Since then, as you admit, God is free, all His attributes considered, to create a being who will abuse the benefit of life, why should you be astonished that, in fact, He uses that liberty which belongs to Him and which you acknowledge in Him?

However it may be metaphysically, you will still say, the common-sense of the heart is opposed to such a conclusion. Where is the father who would bring a son into the world if he foresaw that life would be for him, even through his fault, a fatal gift? And is not God our Father? Has He for us a heart less tender than the heart of a mortal man?

Here the comparison is wanting in force, because it is wanting in justice. God has not created isolated individuals, nor even isolated

worlds. He has created a unique world wherein all beings are bound one to another by relations of dependence and mutual services, and even one cannot be removed without the others suffering by the removal. Among the human race in particular, each man includes in himself a posterity of which the term is unassignable, and which constitutes a group of mutually dependent generations, where no one person can lose his place without drawing away with him the multitude of his descendants. To destroy one man is to destroy a race; to destroy a wicked man is to destroy a people of just men who would spring from him. For good and evil are intertwined in the moving train of humanity; a virtuous son succeeds a culpable father, and the old man too often contemplates, in his remote descendants, crimes which he knew not. But the glance of God embraces at once every succession of life, all the offshoots of good from evil, and of evil from good. No destiny appears solitary to Him, or such as that, in erasing it from the anticipated Book of Life, He would but strike out a plot unworthy to be developed. Adam, a prevaricator, included, as he stood before his Maker, all the posterity of the saints. To refuse him a being on account of his crime, even were the crime never to be pardoned, would have been to annihilate in him all the merits of the human race. How could the goodness of God ask of Him such a sacrifice? How could it require that the wicked should be preferred to the just, that life should be withheld from those who would make good use of it, through regard for those who would make of it an anathema instead of a felicity?

I know God, I love Him, I hope in Him, I bless Him by my life and by my death: why

should the sins of one of my ancestors, foreseen eternally by the divine goodness, intercept my birth, and not even permit me to breathe for a single day in the mystery of liberty, whence might issue my beatitude? Why should I be condemned to nothingness because one of my progenitors abused existence? Where would there be, in such a doom, justice, wisdom, or goodness?

God had not to choose between creating or not creating a wicked man, but between creating or not creating mingled generations of good and bad; and, as all presented this union to His fatidical gaze, He had to choose between creating the universe and not creating at all. The question is very different, and assuredly the most tender father would not elect to die without posterity, if God, discovering to him the future of his race, showed him, in the temporal transfigurations of his blood, the inevitable alternatives of glory and shame, of happiness and misery. How would it be if, instead of a single generation, there were question of all human generations? How would you act if you yourselves got the choice of annihilating the universe or of creating it? for such is the question which has been weighed in the counsels of God. God has judged it, and heaven and earth tell you how He has judged it.—*Ibid.*

LVIII

He asks his Audience not to applaud

I BEG of you, whatever may be the sentiment which will move your hearts, never to applaud. I can well understand the involuntary movement

which, even at the foot of the altar, impels an assembly to exhibit an unanimous testimony of its sympathy and its faith. On certain occasions these acclamations may appear excusable, inasmuch as they are ebullitions of piety from the souls of the audience; nevertheless, I conjure you to obey the constant tradition of Christianity, which is not to reply to the word of God, save by the silence of love and the immobility of respect. You owe it to God; you owe it also perhaps to him who speaks to you in His name. Your plaudits may not evoke pride within him, but he may well be suspected of not being insensible to them; you may think that instead of distributing gratuitously to you what he has received gratuitously, he seeks the price of it in the glory of popularity: a recompense sometimes honourable, but always perishable, and still more perishable and more vain between those who receive and him who gives the lessons of eternity. —*50th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LIX

Free-will and God's Prescience

Among the divine attributes Catholic doctrine ranks prescience, that is to say an infallible foreknowledge of the future, even of the future which depends on free-will. But how can God foresee this future if He be not the master of our actions, and do not direct them as He pleases? How does He know infallibly what I will do tomorrow if it be not that He has decreed it, and that He possesses in His omnipotence the certainty of our determinations?

I will have replied if I discover in the nature of God and in the nature of man how the effects of free causes may be foreseen without destroying liberty.

It is manifest that no reasonable being acts without a motive, that is to say, without something which determines his actions. Hence those avowals which escape us every moment: Here is a reason, an interest, an occasion which determines me, or, in other words, persuades me to act. And when we examine the motives whose efficacious action draws man from repose or uncertainty, we see that there exist but two, the motive of duty and that of passion. Man decides either with a view to the good, the true, the expedient, or decides in obedience to the dictates of a personal satisfaction, independent of every idea of order. The only question is: What will decide his choice between these opposite motives? If he were not free, the stronger inclination of his nature would sway him, as the greater weight bears down one side of the balance. But man is free; between two inclinations, equal or unequal in themselves, it is he who pronounces sovereignly. He decides nevertheless by virtue of a motive which persuades him, and not without reason or arbitrarily. He knows what he does, and why he does it; he knows even why he is persuaded to do it. The persuasion does not come to him from the exterior alone, it comes to him principally from within, from the condition of his will, from his predilections, from his virtues, all which are the fruit of free choice, which are free choice itself in activity, such as it has become, such as it desires to be, such as it presents itself to the external allurements which solicit it for

good or for evil. It is the state of the will, which is the seat of free choice, that determines the election of man between the two motives of duty and passion. Suppose this state to be known, you would know what a man would do in a given case, and in every case wherein your knowledge of his soul will have preceded his action. Such is the basis of human prescience as well as of divine prescience. Have you never confided your fortune or your honour to the word of a man? You have, or, if you have not had occasion, you can name to yourselves those to whom you would willingly offer so high a testimony of your esteem. Whence comes this assurance? How are you certain that you will not expose your life to treason? You are certain of it, because you know the soul to which you abandon yours; this knowledge suffices to enable you to foresee that in any case, whatever may be the peril or the temptation, your fortune and your honour will not be basely sacrificed.

They may be, nevertheless; the heart in which you put your trust is fallible, it is subject to unforeseen assaults; it matters not, you sleep in peace, and no one will accuse you of imprudence or credulity. If it happen that you are deceived by the event, what will you say? You will say: "I knew this man perfectly, I believed him to be incapable of a bad action." Such is the chance to which you will be subject, the chance of imperfect knowledge, because, being of finite intelligence, you cannot read the soul of another, nor even read your own thoroughly. Whence it results that you have but a moral certainty of the correctness of your judgments, and but an assurance of the same degree regarding your power of foresight.

It is not so with God. God, to use an expression of St Paul, "reaches unto the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* We are ever naked before Him. He sees with an infinite foresight the state of our will, and, knowing in the same light all the exterior circumstances to which we shall be subjected, He has an infallible certainty as to the choice which we will make between good and evil, between the motive of duty and that of passion. Hence He knows our history, which is but a struggle, more or less protracted, between two opposite attractions, one bearing us onward towards our real end, the other turning us back towards a base and false end. And this knowledge by anticipation being in nowise the cause of our actions, no more trammels our liberty than if such knowledge did not exist.

The error in this matter arises from considering free-will as a sort of abstract power independent of its own state, having no other motive force than an unlimited caprice. If it were thus, man himself would not be capable of foreseeing his own actions one instant in advance. His sovereignty would be but a permanent idiotcy. He would choose between good and evil without knowing why, and, alternating at hazard between crime and virtue, by reason of his freedom, he would no longer be anything more than an automaton out of order.—*Ibid.*

* Heb. iv, 12.

LX

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity

NOT many days ago* you placed upon the monuments of your capital the memorable inscription: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." This is a part of the primitive charter which has united men to one another, and founded the human race; but it is not the whole of it. It is the charter of rights, not that of duties. But to man, living in society, duties are as important as rights. If liberty is necessary for him as a moral creature, that he may not be oppressed by the constraints of an excessive and unjust domination, obedience is also necessary for him to sustain him, with the aid of impartial and sacred laws, in the living communion which makes him a nation. If equality is necessary for him, to keep him in the rank where God has placed him by an origin which he shares with all his fellows, hierarchy is necessary also for him that he may not fall, having no chief or commandment, into the impotence of individual dissolution. If fraternity is necessary for him, that a sentiment of confidence and love may widen the narrow bonds of the social order, that humanity may be a great family, the issue of one common father, veneration is also necessary for him that he may acknowledge and uphold the authority of age, the magistrature of virtue, the power of the laws in those who administer them, be it as legislators, be it as sovereigns. Write then, if you desire to found durable institutions, write above

* 1848.

the word liberty the word obedience; above the word equality the word hierarchy; above the word fraternity the word veneration; above the august symbol of rights the divine symbol of duties. I have said to you elsewhere that right is the egoistic side of justice, duty its generous and devoted side. Invoke its devotedness, that devotedness may respond to you, and that your edifice may triumph over the ardent passions which, from the origin of society, have not ceased to conspire for its ruin.—*51st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXI

The Sabbath in France

Is there one amongst you who has not been some time touched by the spectacle which a Christian population presents on the day consecrated to God? The public ways are covered by a multitude in holiday attire; youth and age appear with their hopes and their trials, tempered by a sentiment higher than life. A fraternal joy animates the eyes that meet; the servant is nearer to his master; the poor man approaches the rich; all, by the community of the same duty accomplished and the consciousness of the same grace received, feel themselves more than ever the children of the same Father, who is in heaven. The silence of servile works, compensated for by the joyous and measured voice of bells, announces to thousands of men that they are free, and prepares them to endure for God the days when they are not free. Nothing austere obscures those faces; the idea of observance is moderated by that of repose, and the idea of re-

pose is embellished by the presence of a festival. Incense smokes in the temple, light shines upon the altar, music fills God's house and the hearts within it, the priest moves from the people to God, and from God to the people; earth ascends and heaven descends. Who in that assembly will not return calmer and better to his home? Oh! I never pass through that day without emotion; and even here, in this capital,* where so many souls respect not that day, I never see the effect of it upon the populace without raising my thoughts to God in an aspiration of gratitude and love.

In the sorrow of my heart I cannot refrain from telling you that there is a Christian people who despise this ordinance, and this people is ours. Can it be France that so far forgets the most sacred duties of man towards man? Is it she who tears the fundamental contract of humanity; who delivers to the rich, to use as they please, the souls and bodies of the poor; who tramples under foot the day of liberty, of equality, of fraternity—the sublime day of the people of God? I ask you: Is it France that does all this? Excuse her not by saying that she permits to each one the free exercise of his worship, and that no one, if he wills it not, is constrained to labour on the seventh day; for this is to add to the reality of servitude the hypocrisy of enfranchisement. Ask the workman whether he is free to abandon his labour at the dawn of the day which commands him to repose. Ask the young man who consumes his life in the daily acquirement of lucre, by which he does not profit, whether he is free to breathe once in the week the air of heaven and the still purer air of truth.

* Paris.

Ask those blighted beings, who people the cities of industry, whether they are free to save their souls while at the same time relieving their bodies. Ask the innumerable victims of personal cupidity, and of the cupidity of a master, whether they are free to become better, and whether a gulf of labour, without reparation physical or moral, does not devour them alive. Ask even those who do rest, but who rest in the baseness of unrestrained pleasures, enquire of them what the people become in a repose which is not given and protected by God. No liberty of conscience is here but the veil of oppression; it covers with a mantle of gold the base shoulders of the vilest of tyrannies, the tyranny which abuses the sweat of man through cupidity and impiety. If liberty of conscience were here in reality, protestant England would certainly have discovered it; the democracy of the United States of America would surely have profited by the example; and in what places in the world is the integrity of the seventh day more respected? Let those know this who are ignorant of it, let the enemies of God and of the human race, whatever name they may take, let them know that between the strong and the weak, between the rich and the poor, between the master and the servant, it is liberty which oppresses, and the law that sets free. Right is the sword of the powerful, duty is the buckler of the lowly.

Let us remove from France this lamentable error, and it is time to do so, as it has endured too long. Tempests warn us that it is not well to violate the commandments which were promulgated at the Creation, renewed amid the thunders of Sinai, and ratified in the blood of

Calvary. Whosoever is against God is against humanity, and if some unhappy men, armed with what they call reason, fear not to make these two their enemies, we may trust for vengeance to the future alone, to that future which is already the present, and which warns us all to think of our faults and to combat them generously by a salutary reparation. France will do this! Yes, my God! France will do this!* We have the augury of it in the respect which she bears Thee in the midst of the ruins which but yesterday she so suddenly accomplished.* She will listen to the prophecies of experience, she will rise again towards Thee by the difficulties of finding rest in herself; she will recognize as the principle of her salvation those beautiful words which Thou hast spoken to all the peoples of the world by Jesus Christ, Thy only Son: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His justice; and the rest shall be added unto you."† Hear, my God, the voice which speaks to Thee from France; and when one year descended from Thine eternity upon our short life will have led us again into this temple, grant that we may find there erect, stronger and more glorious than ever, our country and Thy truth.—*52nd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXII

Three Religions

NOTHING has been more sterile than the imagination of man in the domain of worship. As in considering the characteristics of beings we reduce them to a certain number of primitive

* 1848. † Matt. vi, 33.

families, so on comparing together the religious branches which exist in the midst of humanity we find that they spring from three chief trunks, the only ones which are really distinct in feature and in their invincible and mutual repulsion. I mean idolatry, Christianity, and Mahometanism. I do not mention Judaism, because before Jesus Christ it was but Christianity awaiting its coronation, and after Jesus Christ it is but Christianity without its crown. There remain then the Christian Churches, which are attached to the trunk of Christ and His Gospel; the idolatrous sects, of which no one has excommunicated another, and whose symbols vied in honouring one another in the council of the Roman Pantheon; finally, the branches of Islamism, which all bow before Mahomet and the Koran. Name to me a worship, and I will trace it either to the idol, to the cross, or to the crescent; but no longer is peace possible, no longer is there a standing ground common to the idol, the cross, and the crescent, memorable banners which still divide the generations between them, and which bear in their folds three theologies separated by a conception radically different regarding the commerce of man with God. In this commerce, in effect, which constitutes religion and supposes an approximation between two beings so far removed from one another by their nature, either, on the one hand, the mind conceives an alliance between divine and human nature which eventuates in confusion, and that is idolatry; or, on the other hand, it conceives this alliance under a form which excludes compatibility between the two natures, and that is Mahometanism; or, in fine, it admits a union of the two natures while they remain distinct even in their

intimacy, and that is Christianity. Idolatry confounds God and man, Mahometanism keeps them at a distance from one another, Christianity associates them: these three systems sum up all existing worships and all possible worships.

Antiquity generally was lost in idolatry, and even superstitions which did not commence with it ended by precipitating themselves upon it as upon an inevitable rock. It was thus because it is difficult to stop at the proper point in theandry, a word whereby Christian theology expresses the participation of God in man and of man in God. When the full light of religious truth no longer illumines the intelligence, it vacillates while it regards this prodigious mystery, and, according as it inclines more to reason or to recollections, to the inspiration of nature or to the impulsion of theological instinct, it stops short of or goes beyond the truth. It was instinct, memory, or a confused presentiment which swayed it in intermediate humanity, I mean the humanity comprised in the period between the deluge and the coming of Christ. When Jesus Christ appeared, the wondrous restitution of the eternal type of the alliance between God and man shed such light upon the world that pagan theology, notwithstanding its twenty ages of empire, could not thenceforth maintain the honour of deceiving the human race. Error was compelled to seek refuge upon another basis, and to assume another form. Arius commenced the edifice, Mahomet completed it. Arius denied the divinity of Jesus Christ; Mahomet declared that the union of the divine nature with human nature in one person was impossible, impious, and idolatrous, and, separating as much as possible the two terms of religious commerce, he

pronounced the fundamental axiom of Islamism and the new faith: "God is God, and Mahomet is His prophet." God is God, that is to say, God can only be God; Mahomet is His prophet, that is to say, the divine action with regard to man is confined to prophecy, and the action of man with regard to God is confined to faith, which accepts prophecy in adoration and prayer. No other worship has arisen since Mahomet; no other will arise in the future. For beneath Mahomet there is nought save pure Rationalism; above him there is found of necessity idolatry or Christianity.

Christianity is the mean between Mahometanism and idolatry. It humanizes God without lowering Him, it deifies man without changing his substance; it is equally removed from the extravagance of pantheism, which confounds every being in a divine chaos, and from the coldness of theism, which banishes the creature to a hopeless distance from the Creator.

Here is the choice, here is the contention. For him who desires to avoid practical atheism there are open in all history but these three gates: he must be an idolater, a Christian, or a Mussulman; he must kneel before an idol, bear the cross, or hoist the crescent; between these he must choose, or remain indifferent amid the spectators who hear the name of God without emotion, and who regard the future without preparing for it.—*54th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXIII

The Conquests of Mind

When we come to consider the intellectual labour accomplished by man here below, we cannot contain our wonder and admiration. Placed upon this earth, as on an island of which the heavens are the ocean, man desired to know the place of his journeying; but innumerable barriers around him opposed his design, and kept him from taking possession of his empire and the place of his exile. The sea opposed him with the jealousy of its waves; he looked upon the sea, and passed over it. The prow of his genius touched the most inaccessible coasts; he traversed them, he mapped them out, and after centuries of daring, bolder than the tempests, he moves, the unopposed lord of the waters, where he wills and when he wills, over the submissive surface of their immensity. He sends his mandates to every shore, now offering havens to his ships; he obtains from them, by untiring commercial enterprise, the luxury and the pride of his life, uniting all climes and making of them, divided though they be, servants obedient to his sovereign desires, over the whole earth.

Another sea, still more vast, more profound, full of infinite mysteries, extended over his head, its waves peopled with stars. A simple shepherd wandering after his flocks, on the pastures of Chaldea, he gazed at the heavens during the serene nights of the East. Aided by silence, he gave names to the stars, marked their course, penetrated the secrets of their occultations, pre-

dicted their disappearance and their return; and all this luminous army, as if taking its orders from the eyes of man, has not ceased to appear in exact cycle, at the appointed place where the observer awaited it. Even the star which appears but for a day in many ages has not hidden from us its course; summoned at a fixed hour, it leaves those unsearchable depths through which no eye could follow it, it comes, it appears at a point indicated beforehand upon our narrow horizon, and saluting with its light the intelligence which prophesied it, it returns to the solitudes where the Infinite alone never loses sight of it.

But between earth and heaven, between the dwelling of man and that of the stars, there extended a space different from both, less subtle than the one, less gross than the other, inhabited by the winds and the storms, and penetrating with its active influences all the sources of our life. Man observed these invisible companions of his being; he decomposed the air he breathed, and seized the tints of the fluid which gave him light; the swiftness of the one escaped him no more than the weight of the other. In vain did the thunder, that living image of the Almighty power, seem to defy the daring of his investigations; like a giant who had struck down all around him, and who scorned every obstacle, he measured his strength with this terrible combination of the forces of nature, and, more master than ever, he treated the thunder as a child who is led by a thread, now arresting it docile at the summit of palaces and temples, then compelling it to precipitate itself by harmless routes into the mute abysses of the earth. The earth, the sea, the heaven and all its luminaries, the air and all

its phenomena, nothing within or without has escaped the mind of man; observation revealed to him facts, facts led him to causes and to laws. And these particular sciences, scattered rays from a common centre, became united and threw light on one another in a more general science, which, by putting us in possession of the abstract mysteries of number, of area, and of movement, placed naked before us the eternal elements of all created things.

But is that all? Has the king of the world stopped there? Believe it not. Had he gone no further, he had already been a poet, a *savant*, an artist, already a man, but not a divine man. But he was divine, and all the visible worlds had not in them wherewith to satisfy his intelligence and give repose to his heart. He ascended higher; he asked himself what there is beyond the stars, what orb it is that moves all those orbs measured by his compass, and he replied: The infinite. For the finite, containing not itself, can be bounded only by the infinite. But what is the infinite? It is a void space multiplying itself ceaselessly before itself, a boundless abyss calling to itself, to give them a place, all actual life and all possible life, without being itself a living entity. Man, who had regarded the sea and the heavens, regarded fearlessly that other sea and that other heaven; whatever was the nature of the intellectual space wherein, beyond all sensible things, his thought revelled, he saw that the principle of being, of life, and of motion was not there. He went forward; he passed the imaginary infinite to contemplate face to face the real infinite, and seeing it without seeing it, defining it without defining it, and arrived at the term of all truth, he said, with

a voice which was the first, and which will be the last:

Beyond the heavens the God of heaven dwells!

Well may we tremble before the greatness of man; just now he but moved the dust, and behold him touching God!

And, nevertheless, is there no sadness in your soul? Is there in your intelligence nothing obscure or unknown? Once upon a time, in the happy days of Greece, there was a sage who served his country with his sword, serving it at the same time by lessons which merited the honour of preparing human wisdom to bow down before the Gospel of the divine wisdom. Socrates, for it was he, went forth one morning from his tent, seated himself before it, and burying his face in his hands, became absorbed in thought. The sun rose, the army was in motion, the horsemen passed, all the noise of a camp enveloped his reverie; but he, motionless and, as it were, rapt above himself, let the evening come, without strength or thought to raise his head from his knees. On what was this great man pondering? What sad mystery can have concealed from him the hours, and given material for so long continued a meditation? Alas! the same mystery which torments you, and leads you hither.* Without desiring to insult your reason, after having just now so exalted it, may I not ask you, with Socrates: What do you know? This question which he addressed to the sages of his time, may I not address it to you, to you, the children of sages? Twenty centuries have passed since the time of Socrates—have they changed the condition of the human mind

* To Notre-Dame.

and caused the plenitude of light, which was wanting to the master of Plato, to descend upon you? A light, it is true, a great light has risen upon the world since Socrates drank the hemlock; but it has descended from Calvary, and not from reason. Those who have not received it with the obedience of faith, far from being enlightened by it, have seen increase the darkness and the uncertainty of their thoughts; for a terrible question has been added for them to all the other questions, whose enigma pursues our understanding. I say to you, then, without fear of me being contradicted or of you being offended, that there is a thing which you cannot know, when, in order to know it, you interrogate your own intelligence. Philosopher or peasant, writer with a pen of gold of pages which will fill posterity with an immortal incense, or obscure worker of a life without a morrow, whatever you may be, there is a thing which you know not. What you do know, I have said; what you do not know, it is yourself, it is your soul, it is the reason of its existence, it is your destiny. You know all, except the secret of your life. I do not yet seek the cause of this; I state the fact. Is your soul of its own nature imperishable? Why is it united to the body? Why is it separated from it at a particular time? Whither does it go on issuing forth from the prison of a day? What is death? What is that place into which your fathers have descended, and where they await you, that place which calls you, which says to you by the voice of Bossuet, that *the ranks are filling there?* Know you with certainty? Know you better than Socrates, placed by injustice in presence of the future, and receiving in his condemnation a new assurance of our immortality?

If I consult the history of human wisdom, I see it converge at this mystery by every road, but by very different roads. Plato affirms, Cicero doubts, Epicurus denies, and the human mind is ever divided between these three zones of thought. Does it desire, after ages of faith, to restore, in modern times, an independent philosophy? Descartes commences by affirmation, Bayle continues by doubt, Voltaire ends by negation. Philosophical activity needs not two centuries to accomplish this fatal cycle, whose result is what you see, namely, a society without assured belief, broken up into a thousand opinions, each of which calls itself the true, each of which has its heralds, its hopes, its reverses, and all of which, disputing how to build up, agree only on one point, to destroy! The Greeks presented this spectacle to the world, the Romans renewed it; and we, two thousand years after the lesson of these ruins, desire to receive from ourselves their terrible teaching. There it is; look at it; learn from it at least the limit of your intelligence, and that you need a light other than your own to know yourselves. —*55th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXIV

Speech

A MAN comes into the world. His eyes, his ears, his lips, all his senses are closed. He has no idea of the nothingness which rejects him, or of the being at which he arrives; he is ignorant of himself and of everything else. Leave him such as nature has just formed him: leave him there, naked, dumb, more dead than living; he

will live, perhaps, but he will live without knowing it, an incomplete guest of creation, a soul without the power of finding itself. His eyes will open, but you cannot read a thought in them, and his heart will throb, but you cannot find one virtue in it. Happily something watches over him. The providence of speech covers him with its fertilizing wings; speech seeks him incessantly; it looks upon him, it touches him, it incites him, and endeavours by its action to awake the sleeping soul. And at length, after days which have been ages, from this dull and senseless abyss, from this child who has scarce shown by a smile that he appreciates the love which has placed him in the world, speech suddenly escapes and replies. The man lives now, he thinks, he loves, he names those whom he loves, he makes return to them by one word for all the love which he has received.

But this is only the beginning of man. He, the predestined of the infinite, knows yet but the bosom of his mother, his cradle, his chamber, some pictures hung upon the walls, the space which the eye takes in from a window; an hour is for him a history; a house, the universe; a caress, the last end of things. He must go forth beyond this narrow horizon, and prepare himself to take his place in that breathless society where all, having the same rights and the same duties, will dispute with him the glory of living. Presently he will descend the staircase of his home, and will appear in public; he will hear the dolorous crash of contending ambitions and conflicting ideas, and will be astonished for the first time at the price which life costs and the mysteries it contains. Who will explain them to him? Who will introduce him for good or ill

to the science of man, that science whose elements are the past, the present, the future, earth and heaven, which touches nothingness at one pole, the infinite at the other? Again, it will be speech: no longer the word of his father and of his mother, but a chance word, which it may be will stifle in him the germs of truth, or perhaps develop them, according to the mind of the masters who will direct his mind. For he will have masters, he cannot escape this second reign of speech over him. Speech has placed him in the world; speech has awakened and given the first direction to his thought; whatever he may desire, whatever he may do, for his happiness or his misery, speech will accomplish its work; it will make of him a vessel of faith or of unbelief, a victim of pride or of charity, a slave of the senses or of duty; and if he is to be always free to combat evil, it will be on condition of calling to his aid a better word than the word which will have deceived him.

Such is the history of a man; let us see what is that of a people. A people is buried in the manners of barbarism; they know not even the elementary art, namely, to make the earth minister to their wants. Like animals, they live on their prey. After they have found it, they sleep by the fire which warms them, or beneath the trees which shade them, until hunger again compels them to wrest from the forest and from chance their uncertain subsistence. They have no country; the very soil on which they wander has received from their labour no consecration, from their power no defence; and although they preserve there the bones of their ancestors, they wander over it without a past and without a future. If they be attacked they defend them-

selves like a wild beast in its den, but without being able to make of the piece of wood which served to defend them either a sword or a flag. Ideas are wanting to them, and as a consequence virtue, progress, history, stability are wanting.

But now all is changed. These people settle down; they pitch their tents, they dig trenches, they place guards—there is something durable and holy to guard. A temple presents to them, by a visible image, the God who has made the world, the Father of justice, and the Dweller in souls. They adore Him in spirit; they pray to Him with faith. The sun no longer passes over their heads as a fire which is extinguished in the evening and is rekindled in the morning, but as the solemn measure of the ages, bringing to each day its duty, to each century its duration. They reckon its revolutions, and distribute their own history through the cycle wherein all the nations have theirs enshrined. These people live at last, they reveal their presence by men who have a name, by acts which have an empire. But what has delivered them from their anterior death? What has made of a barbarous horde a regular and civilized society? The same power which made man: speech. Orpheus has descended from the mountains of Thrace; he has sung; and Greece, living Greece, has sprung from the voice of his lyre. A missionary has appeared in the solitude with a crucifix for a harp; he has named God, and savages, simple even to nakedness, have covered their nascent modesty with leaves. The children have smiled at the man of speech, and mothers have believed in the lips which brought to their sons the benediction of the Great Spirit.—*56th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXV

Dead and Living Words

HAVE you remarked that there are dead words and living words, words which fall to earth like a spent arrow, and others which fall upon the mind like a devouring flame? And assuredly you do not believe that the difference results from the greater or less vibration of the air caused by the mechanical action of the lungs. The difference is from the soul, which is the source of speech. Dead words are those which issue from a dead soul; living words are those which issue from a living soul. When an orator, in a matter capable of eloquence, speaks to you without moving you, when he leaves you master of your resolutions, insensible to error or to truth, believe me, it is because a soul has not spoken to you. For it is impossible, if a soul had spoken to you, that yours should remain a stranger to it; it is impossible for a soul to feel, without being moved, the breath of another soul.—*Ibid.*

LXVI

Eloquence

IN 1738 England was governed by a Minister who desired peace, and who desired it at any price. But at this very time an English sailor was taken prisoner upon the seas, and outraged and mutilated by some Spaniards, an event which called forth through all England the most profound indignation. Nevertheless the Minister

determined on preserving peace, and the British Parliament decided on upholding his policy. The sailor appeared in the streets of London, exhibited the bloody traces of the injuries which he had received, and so excited popular feeling by the spectacle that the Parliament could not refuse to see him and hear his complaint. He entered the House of Commons, and, after relating with calm and simple brevity the circumstances attending the outrage of which he was the victim, he concluded with these words: "When the Spaniards had thus mutilated me, they thought to terrify me by the threat of death; but I accepted death as I had accepted outrage, and commended my soul to God and my vengeance to my country." War was declared. This unlettered man needed but a quarter of an hour to change the counsels of his country, to compel the minister to draw the sword, the parliament to vote subsidies, the nation to applaud, and human blood to atone for the outrage. He persuaded.

And every day you assist at these triumphs of speech; or at least, if they are more rare than I say, you assist at them sometimes, although it be only in memory, when you are present in spirit at the famous scenes of eloquence. You hear Demosthenes obtaining the condemnation of Eschinus, Cicero causing the death-warrant of Ligarius to fall from the hand of Cæsar, and you ask yourselves what constitutes this sovereign art without which reason and justice are not sure of conquering, by which error and passion too often triumph. Yes, the eloquent tongue is a ruler that enforces obedience; but what is eloquence? What more than light and truth can it infuse into speech? Is there anything in the

world more persuasive than light, stronger than truth? Yes, stronger than truth is the principle whence it emanates; more persuasive than light is the fire whence it radiates; greater than speech is the soul where it resides and whence it issues. Eloquence is the soul itself; eloquence is the soul breaking through the banks of the flesh, quitting the breast which bears it, and casting itself headlong into the soul of another. Are you astonished that it commands, that it reigns? Verily, I believe that it is a soul substituted for yours. Is it not evident that if this soul, which possesses you, which is in you, which is yourself more than yourself, that if this soul says to you: Go! you will go: Come! you will come: Bend the knee! you will bend the knee?

In short, the mystery of speech in the state of eloquence is the substitution of the soul which speaks for the soul which hears; or, to speak with a strictness which cannot be questioned, it is the fusion of the soul that speaks with the soul that hears. Eloquence has but one rival, and it is a rival only because it is eloquent: it is love. Love, like eloquence, blends hearts together, and the power of each, so dissimilar in appearance, has the same cause and the same effect.—*Ibid.*

LXVII

Is the Incomprehensible beneficial to Man?

THERE are those amongst you who are satisfied that they owe nothing to this strange benefactor. Disciples of reason, they think that, unaided, they have formed themselves, and that evidence alone

has had a place in the development of their minds. But even supposing this to be true, a few men are not mankind, and I speak of mankind. I speak of you all, contemporaries of the nineteenth century, bound through your fathers to the ages which have preceded you, having all a part in a great historic movement which has changed the face of the world, and which has prepared for each one of you another destiny than that which the course of ancient civilization would have provided for you. This is the real man, this is he whom I interrogate, and not the ideal man who has separated himself, as he thinks, from the paternity of his time. But this real man, what has made him? What has formed modern humanity? Is it not Christianity? And is there one amongst you who will deny the superiority of Christian man over all who have been the sons of another generation? If you doubt it, I will say to you: Compare yourselves with the most illustrious and the most perfect humanity which has reigned in the world before or in your time. True, that was a great race which had Athens and Rome for its country, a race fertile in legislators, in philosophers, in heroes, memorable in war by its conquests, in politics by its institutions, in peace by its arts, and which, extinct as it has been for long ages, calls us still around its ruins to impart to us its lessons. But, marvellous as has been its history, which of you would consent to be born in that antiquity? Which of you would sacrifice the rights and the duties of Christian man for all the glory of Greek or Roman? While reading the most beautiful compositions which they have left us, we feel that, from their gods to their virtues, they were peoples in infancy; and the

very excellence of their literature, far from being the veil of their inferiority, is its striking and immortal revelation. The *chefs d'œuvre* of the two languages will go down to the latest posterity as a witness that barbarity of manners may be allied with exquisite culture of intellect, and great feebleness of thought with admirable knowledge of style. When Christianity, born with the world but unknown to it, arose and appeared to this ingenious and powerful society, which had never had an equal upon earth, it had but to speak and to die, and that civilization was ruined. The Greek and the Roman could not resist the Christian.

And what, then, was the Christian? What had he with him stronger than Athens and Rome—Athens, the mistress in the science of speech, Rome, the mistress in the art of combating and of governing? What had he? One thing only, but which contained all things—the incomprehensible. He announced to the world that the human race, tainted from its origin, received and transmitted with its blood the responsibility of an inexpiable sin; but that God, one in three persons, had sent His Son upon the earth to take upon Him our nature in the womb of a virgin, and to redeem us, by a voluntary sacrifice, from sin and death. He announced that this mystery was accomplished, that the Son of God had come in the flesh and had appeared in Judea, that He had taught there, and that, put to death upon a cross, and buried in a sepulchre, He had arisen the third day, assuring by His death His triumph over sin, and by His resurrection His triumph over death. Such was Christian dogma, and such also the principle of the civilization which has made

you what you are, by overturning the whole society of antiquity. Either deny your superiority over the ideas and the things of paganism, or acknowledge the utility of the incomprehensible.

You may think that Christianity includes two distinct parts: the one reasonable, which is the source of the good it has operated in the world, the other mysterious, which is but an envelope in which high truths and holy virtues have by chance been enclosed. May not, in fact, the Gospel be thus naturally decomposed? If we read in it of miracles and dogmas which affright reason, we find in it still more frequently a sage who teaches the people a simple and sublime morality, meekness, modesty, patience, disinterestedness, justice, and, what comprehends all in a single precept, a sincere love for God and man. Ought we to be astonished that a code so perfect, the emanation of a pure Soul who sustained even unto death the lessons which He had taught, had eventually produced in the human race a salutary and striking effect? It is impossible to read the Gospel without wishing at least to become better; and this desire, having become that of a great number, has in the end been realized in some who, from age to age, have ornamented the world by their virtues. The incomprehensible is but the objectless accessory; it is the fable which precedes or overlays truth.

I admit that all Christianity converges towards the love of God and man, and that in this lies the secret of the prodigious change which it has introduced and which it maintains amongst us. But this love, so long unknown upon earth, and of which it is still, even with our experience

of it, so difficult to acquire a knowledge—this love, far from being the cause of the moral revolution effected by Christianity, is this revolution itself in its final and most profound effect. The Gospel, you say, has called forth the love of God and man: it is true, I know it, I admit it; but how has it succeeded in causing to be loved those who were not loved during four thousand years? How has it drawn the human heart from the egotism of its passions and, above all, from the egotism of its virtues? Was it by saying: Love God, love man? Alas! had it said but that, it would have had precisely the same power as that which is exercised over us by so many dead or living philosophies which honour us with their counsels. A statue would have been raised to Jesus Christ upon the threshold of an academy; His likeness would have been preserved in the museums of civilized peoples, and, on the invention of printing, it would have been written in every language of Europe that the Gospel is a beautiful book: but the poor would have known neither the book nor the sage, and all hearts would have continued the enjoyments of sense and of pride.

Would you know how Jesus Christ has raised us towards God and moved us to compassionate man? Go forth from Notre-Dame, and look to your left. Upon an edifice without architectural merit you will read this inscription: HÔTEL-DIEU. Perhaps the inscription has disappeared from the stone—I know not; but it remains in the memory and in the language of the people, which is sufficient. Cross the threshold, ascend the staircase, raise your eyes to the image over that door; you will read there: THE MAN GOD. Go still further, and you will meet with one of

those voluntary servants who consecrate their days to the infirmities of the poor; you are young, handsome, rich, and she is clothed in a beauty which is the dowry of virtue; offer to her your hand, and she will reply: ME, THE SPOUSE OF GOD! If these incomprehensible words, *Hôtel-Dieu*, *Man God*, *Spouse of God*, fail to enlighten you, ask this soul why she has quitted the hopes of the world to immolate herself in a hospital, in the midst of the sufferings of those who are unknown to her: she will reveal to you her secret. From whom would you learn it if not from those who possess the love of which you seek the cause? She will tell you that she loves God because God has loved her even unto death, and that she loves mankind because God, in assuming their nature and dying for them, has made them sharers in His adorable goodness. If God had not become man, if He had not died, be assured that there would not be a Spouse of God, or a Hôtel-Dieu; the virtue of the Christian springs from the incomprehensible as the flower springs from the earth. The incomprehensible is the soul of the Christian, it is his light, his strength, his life, his breath. You say that it is foolishness—be it so; but I did not undertake to prove to you that it is not foolishness, but that it serves you. For sixty years* you have endeavoured to do without this folly, and to preserve the benefits of Christianity while repudiating its dogmas; it is for you to say whether you have succeeded.

Man is a divine animal, and the incomprehensible is his nutriment. If this gift of heaven were ever wholly withdrawn from him, you would behold a spectacle which I cannot depict, be-

* 1849.

cause it has never been witnessed. Paganism itself, barren as it was, contained confused remnants of primordial incomprehensibility, and these made it great amid certain peoples and in certain times. When Rome had resolved to establish upon a solitary hill the centre and the foundation of her future power, she raised upon it at one and the same time a temple and a camp, leaving between them an open space, which was as it were a vantage ground whereon she stood, one hand upon her weapons and the other upon heaven. Thence it was that she looked forth upon and dominated the universe, imbibing there a wisdom as invincible as her courage; and when her triumphant generals brought her the kings and the spoils of nations, they ascended to this Capitol as to the tutelary place where their victories had had birth in the will of the gods who inhabited it. This religious character endured as long as the virtue and the liberty of Rome. The sacred mysteries had ever the place of honour; they were carried even into the presence of the enemy; and those famous generals, who had received from fortune and their own genius so many assurances of conquest, dared not commit themselves to battle without having consulted, through the augurs, the impenetrable council of the world's and the country's gods. But when Cicero could avow that he was unable to conceive how two augurs retained the secret of looking at one another without laughing, Rome fell from the Capitol to the Palatine, from the temple of the gods to the palace of the Cæsars, and very soon Tiberius, followed by Nero, lavished the contempt of his tyranny upon the living and the dead of the sovereign people. Laugh as you please at the

sacred chickens; but know at least that when there were no longer sacred chickens, there were no longer Scipios. And you will meet with the same spectacle, issue of the same cause, everywhere in the history of the world. Everywhere the decadence of peoples has followed the decadence of the incomprehensible, and the earth has devoured all those who have ceased to regard aught of heaven save what the eye discovers above the horizon.—*57th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXVIII

Scepticism

SCEPTICISM is but the despair of an intelligence strong enough to know that it sees not the *whole of anything*, according to the expression of Pascal, but too feeble to respect in mystery the inevitable limit imposed upon the created mind. Whilst ordinary Rationalism, infatuated by its own ideas, believes that it comprehends all that it thinks upon, the sceptic, with quite as much pride and penetration, discerns the feeble side of human science, and conceives a sombre disgust for truth. Passing his melancholy gaze over the progressive concatenation of things, and fixing it upon God, he asks himself: "Do I comprehend God? No; then, away with God. But, myself, my soul, do I comprehend it? No; then, away with the soul. But matter at least, surely I see it, I test it, and nevertheless do I know what it is? Can I say that I comprehend it? No; then, away with matter." Thus, from degree to degree, from despair to despair, reason *loses itself* in itself, according to the energetic

expression of St Paul, and upon the tottering ruins of all reality it asks itself in lamentable anguish: "What do I know, and what am I?" Doubt, it is true, does not often descend to that depth at which nothing subsists in the mind; but wherever it stops, it is the murderer of the soul, and be it higher or lower, it has but one and the same cause, which is the refusal to consent to the incomprehensible as to a necessity and an element of reason. As for me, if I were in such a state, if I held that absolute light is the sole mark of the true, I declare to you that I would not believe more in matter than in spirit, or more in spirit than in God; I would be to myself a sorrowful enigma, a breath in the desert, a wailing in a sepulchre, the sport of an existence without principle or end; I would pass my days at the mercy of each sun, between the sadness of yesterday and the joy of to-morrow, expecting nothing more from life, nothing more from death. But, thanks be to God, I adore in the evidence the obscurity which limits it; I know that truth, the one and sacred object of my own soul, is great as the infinite, and that the infinite being comprehensible only by its equal —that is to say, by itself—it is natural that I see nothing to the very end, but in a measure which suffices for knowledge, without sufficing to exhaust.—*Ibid.*

LXIX

Faith

FAITH is an act of confidence, and therefore a product of the heart. It requires in him who accords it the same uprightness as in him who inspires it, and never has the ungrateful man,

or the deceitful, or the egotist, or any of those whom the Scripture calls emphatically the *children of unbelief*,* been capable of it. To confide is to give oneself; none give themselves but the magnanimous, or at least the generous. Not that faith excludes prudence, or that we must put our trust in the first word that falls from unknown lips, but prudence being satisfied, there is still necessary a generous effort to bring forth that difficult word: I believe.

Alexander, king of Macedon, was upon the banks of the Cydnus. He was there stricken by a malady which seemed likely to save Persia, and his physician, whom he dearly loved, prepared for him a decisive draught. But on the previous evening, a letter written by a hand which he knew, warned the sick man to beware of his friend as of a traitor who had bartered his life. Alexander kept his counsel. The next day, when the cup was brought to him, he took from beneath his pillow the accusing paper, handed it to his physician, took the cup and drank its contents at a draught. All antiquity has praised this action of Alexander, and his most famous victories—Granicus, Issus, Arbela—have not encircled his head with greater glory. Whereupon a celebrated writer, whom I do not wish to name, asks, what there was so beautiful in this boasted action; for Alexander was at the head of a numerous army within an enemy's territory, the master of a nascent kingdom, the man of Greece, charged with its vengeance and its designs; he ought, on all these grounds, to have respected his life, on which depended the fate of so many others; and what merit was there in exposing it recklessly to the

* Eph. ii, 2.

risk of poisoning? But the writer whom I have cited, after having made these remarks, corrects himself, and says: "What is there so beautiful in this action of Alexander? Unhappy man, can you comprehend it if it must be told you? Its beauty is that Alexander believed in virtue, that he believed in it at the peril of his life!"

Here is a magnificent exposition of the faith of a great heart; and it is also the exposition of all faith, be it addressed to man or addressed to God. Whoever makes an act of faith, whether he knows it or not, drinks the cup of Alexander; *he believes at the peril of his life;* he enters that league of Abraham, who was called "the Father of all believers,"* because in his old age, exhausted in body but not in heart, he raised an obedient sword over his only son who was all his love and all his race, hoping against hope in the word which had promised him posterity. And if there is a being who, opposed to these magnanimous memories, has never produced from his soul an act of faith, you can fearlessly accuse him of having dishonoured in himself the work of God. For faith is not only a virtue, that is to say, a generous and efficacious effort towards good; it is the sacred portal whereby enter all the other virtues, the blood-stained prodrome where the sacrifices commence, and whither come the victims meetly immolated at the sanctuary of God. There is not an act of devotedness, an act of love, an act honourable or holy, which has not been first an act of faith, and this is the reason why the Scripture declares so often that it is by faith that man is justified and saved. The Jews believed that the principle of salvation was the observance of the law in consideration of the re-

* Rom. iv, 11.

compenses of God. St Paul reiterates to them that works are powerless if they are not vivified by a superior element. "It is one God," he cries, "that justifieth circumcision by faith and uncircumcision through faith."* What are works, in fact, if they are accomplished under the influence of a purely scientific view? Merely a calculation of benefit or of good administration for ourselves and others. Some are just, sober, economical, diligent, faithful to their word, because by acting thus they gain more than they lose; but place these well-regulated minds in the presence of the cup of Alexander—that is to say, in the presence of a sacrifice which may be avoided without loss, of a virtue which presents no visible remuneration—then you will see the hollowness of a heart where faith is wanting. I do not even mean divine faith, but that indefinable, nameless, indescribable faith which is the foundation of all that is great. Therefore, when St Paul pronounces that sovereign decree, "Without faith it is impossible to please God,"† we may add, "or men."

Hence arises the weakness of society at the present time. Never has science brought to bear upon things a more brilliant and complete illumination than at present; yet never has it been so easy to break the social bond in the hands which essay in turn to unite its parts. It is because science is not the principle of human order; it is but one of its glorious ornaments, and if it oppress faith instead of sustaining it, it becomes the parricidal instrument of a ruin wherein man will acknowledge, too late, that he must believe in order to live a single day, even although it were needless to believe in order to live eternally.

* Rom. iii, 30. † Heb. xi, 6.

Human faith is the life of the natural man as divine faith is the life of the supernaturalized man, and these two men constituting but one, divine faith preserves human faith as human faith sustains divine faith, were it only in proving the synthesis which exists between the two orders whose distinct but harmonious elements compose our destiny.—*58th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXX

The Causes of Unbelief

You believe not, and you conclude from this that faith is impossible; for my part, I conclude that you do not what is necessary in order to arrive at faith, and I will prove it in a few words.

The first cause of incredulity is voluntary ignorance. Faith can, no more than science, be acquired without a certain application of mind. When the mind is not applied, it is inert, it ceases to be a power; it is, as regards the object before it, as if it were not. What are mathematics to an intelligence which has never reflected on the laws of number, of quantity, and of motion? What is philosophy to a man who has never asked himself what is being, what is an idea, what is the absolute, the relative, cause or effect? And, for the same reason, what is faith to a soul which has never seriously thought upon the necessary relations of the creature with God?

Let me ask you, at what age and after what studies did you decide that religion is an error? Was it at forty? No, you decided it in the flower of your age, at the moment when, casting

off the apparel of childhood, reason and passion celebrated together their joyous advent to the agitated surface of your being. Up to that time, simple and submissive, a pious worshipper of the thoughts of your mother, you had questioned nothing, denied nothing, you lived by a faith as pure as your heart. But scarcely had the double puberty of man caused its sharp sting to be felt by your senses and your intellect, than, without taking time to mature your power, and impatient of the mysteries of nature and the mysteries of God, you became ashamed to believe; while at the same time you lost that other shame which is the divine guardian of innocence. Incapable of any act worthy of a man, you passed judgment sovereignly upon God and man; you doubted, denied, apostatized, despised your fathers, accused your masters, summoned before your tribunal the virtues and sorrows of ages; in fine, you transformed your soul into a desert of pride. Then, this ruin completed, you chose for your end one of the ambitions of man, the glory of arms or that of letters, or still less high, as chance led you, and every effort of your faculties was directed towards the idolatry of your future. You learned no more than to be one day the effective hero of your dreams; you sacrificed your days and your nights to this egotistical image, reserving of them but a secret and unknown part to the other egotism of man, voluptuousness. And never, during this sad and checkered dream, did religion appear to you but as a futile souvenir of your early years, a weakness or a hypocrisy of humanity. You did not deign to give to it one hour of study, or one desire; and if sometimes, attracted by a celebrated name, you opened a book or crossed the

threshold of a basilica, you did so with the haughtiness of a mind which had judged, and had no idea of reversing its decree. O confidence of youth in error! O security of souls who have yet seen but the early dawn of life! Oh, how good God has been in not calling you away in that hour of ignorance and enchantment! For already you are no longer subject to its crude certitudes; time has brought back to you doubt and the obscure presentiments of truth. You see that your unbelief was born of a puerile act, and that, for your honour and your repose, it needs a ratification.

This second labour it is, this labour of return and examination, which lays the foundation of faith in man, and maintains it in humanity. Faith is also, indeed, a gift of childhood; it strikes its roots into the soul which has just been born; but it is the slow action of life which brings it to maturity. When man has seen man during long years, when he has known his feebleness and his misery by experiences which no longer permit him to doubt, and already the grand figure of death places nearer to him the final prophecy, then naturally his gaze becomes more profound. He discerns more clearly the trace of the divine, because he knows better what man cannot do, and, moreover, the wearisomeness of present things evokes in him a relish for things unseen. Therefore it is that a writer, whose name escapes me, has excellently said: "At twenty, we believe religion to be false; at forty, we begin to suspect that it may be true; at fifty, we desire that it may be true; at sixty, we no longer doubt its truth." Light and life progress with equal pace, and death, in disabusing us of all, completes the progressive revelation which com-

menced in our regard on the lips of our mother. The child and the woman are the vanguard of God; the man of mature years is His apostle and martyr; you, young men, you are but the deserters of a day.

I know well that voluntary ignorance does not of itself explain the sad phenomenon of unbelief, and that there are men versed in the things of religion who attain not the happiness of faith. The examples of this are rare, but I have met with them. They are the victims of a passion the most obstinate of all, namely, the pride of science. The pride of science is the infatuation of a spirit inebriated with itself, which admires itself in what it knows, as did Narcissus in his lake, and which, regarding any limit as an insult to its capacity, proposes to treat with God as an equal with an equal. It studies not through love of truth, but in order to oppose it; it delights in creating clouds, in discovering a grain of sand which may serve as a blasphemy, and which it may cast at heaven. If it look up to the stars, it is in order to get from them the secret of the world's eternity; if it descend into the bosom of the earth, it is to seek arms against some great biblical fact; if it interrogate the necropolis of Egypt or the ruins of Babylon, it is only to hear there a voice which denies some most authentic tradition. Its science is but a bitter strife between itself and God.

Who could remain true while possessed by such a passion? who would accept it as judge? Faith is an act of confidence; it has its roots in the sincerity of an upright and loving heart. But those of whom I speak would not believe even mathematical demonstrations if their aim and

conclusion were truths of religion. Like Jean-Jacques, they would prefer declaring themselves fools to declaring themselves convinced. And in truth this is not an imaginary picture. Interrogate the recollections of your conscience. Have you never been filled with joy on discovering in history or in nature something which appeared to you to be marked with an anti-Christian sign? Have you never clapped your hands when somebody said to you: Here is an argument against Jesus Christ? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." * Such is the first condition on which you are to arrive at faith. In vain does the sun appear in the firmament, if his light be for us but a reason for refusing to gaze at him.

Finally, a third cause of unbelief is depravity of morals. I do not mean to say that every weakness of our poor flesh is an obstacle to faith—faith is itself the principle of chastity, and Jesus Christ has uttered against the Pharisees these divine words: "The harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before you." † There is a humble vice, a vice which knows itself, which despises itself, which strikes its breast. I will not say that it is dear to God; but God can forgive it as He forgave Magdalene. There is, on the other hand, a vice poisoned with pride, a vice which exalts its head, which laughs and mocks; this God hates, and it is an almost invincible obstacle to faith, for it is the union of two perversities which naturally exclude one another, and of which the junction destroys in the soul the last resources of good. Pride alone is so insupportable to God that He prefers

* Matt. vii, 7. † Matt. xxi, 31.

humble vice to proud virtue. How great must be His hatred of vice inflated by pride! Now, nothing is less rare than this lamentable disposition of the heart. Slaves though we may be to the vilest propensities and most shameful practices, we clothe ourselves in the pride of a conscience without reproach, and we appeal to our honour, our probity, our genius, and we cover with the name of amiable weaknesses the prostitution of our every sense to voluptuousness. We employ half a century in perverting around us the ignorance of youth and the beauty of virtue; and after having precipitated into abjection a number of souls of whom we do not even deign to respect the ruins in our memory, instead of saying to God with St Peter: "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,"* we complain of the little light which God has imparted to His works, and we impute to Him our misfortune in not knowing Him and serving Him. Do you think that miracles are due to such complaints, and that God is in fault in replying only by unrelenting silence? Oh yes, the harlots shall go into the kingdom of God before us, because nearly all were victims before they became mercenaries, and they are moved to raise to God, from the depths of their abasement, that suppliant glance of meekness and humility which is more than a feeling of remorse, if it is not yet a virtue. God will hear them; He hears the faintest sigh of sincerity, and He speeds every tear which begins to flow for Him. But the pride of ignorance, the pride of science, the pride of vice, He despises all three; He bears with them until that day when the angels will sing for the second time, in presence of the whole

* Luke v, 8.

assembled universe, the hymn of God made man: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will!" *—*Ibid.*

LXXI

Christianity and the Age

MAN cannot be infinite, and nevertheless his vocation is to enjoy the infinite. Here lies the secret of your own time; a suffering time which Christianity alone can heal, yet whose wounds Christianity enlarges. If we compare the revolutions of antiquity with those of which we are witnesses,† we remark a great difference in their profundity. Doctrines played no part in the civil conflicts of the ancient peoples; the empire succeeded the republic, Vespasian succeeded Vitellius. A legion spoke in the east, another on the Danube or the Rhine; the senate, taking part with the stronger, adopted the new emperor, and saluted him with the name of Eternity. It was the eternity of one day awaiting that of the morrow. And thus from change to change revolved the vulgar cycle of the ambition of some contending with the vices of all. To-day ambition exists, as well as vices, but revolutions have a higher source in general ideas which are constituted the cause of the human mind, and by which alone the generations are moved. It is error or truth which agitates them, and even when they are deceived they have the honour of being seduced by a thought; so much has Christianity elevated man above himself! Therefore it is that modern revolutions, being

* Luke ii, 14. † 1850.

doctrinal, will not end, like those of antiquity, in a man or an accident; they will end only in a doctrine. But Christianity alone is a doctrine; it alone possesses the authority which commands and the charity which persuades; it alone has known, comprehended, announced the preternatural vocation of man; it alone has raised him from earth and helped him towards God; it alone has the deposit of the divine word in prophecies verified by history, and the deposit of grace in the sacraments accredited by the virtues of which they are the source; it alone resists the effusion of evil, and evil is so great only because it attacks Christianity, its only enemy. Know then, you who are Christians, the all-importance of your mission in the terror-stricken generation of which you form a part. They speak to us of order; it is you who are order. They speak to us of peace; it is you who are peace. They speak to us of the future; it is you who are the future. They speak to us of security; it is you who are security. For order, peace, the future, security, amongst the nations formed by Jesus Christ, cannot issue save from a doctrine which contains all truth, all virtue, all the plenitude which man needs, and Christianity alone answers these conditions. Endeavour, then, to make it known and loved; sow the Gospel in the public evils. It will germinate there sooner or later; and if we ourselves gather not the harvest, we shall at least have prepared it for a posterity happier than we. —*60th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXII

Duty and Interest

It is my duty: such is the conclusive argument of conscience. Never has conscience said: It is my interest. If it said so, it would be lost, because it would disarm itself by substituting a base idea for a generous idea, a calculation susceptible of illusion for an absolute dogmatic certitude. Everything great that has been accomplished in the world has been done at the call of duty; everything miserable that has been accomplished has been done in the name of interest. The history of man as well as his heart will never permit the confounding of two motive powers which are more than dissimilar, because they are enemies; and on that day when God will requite the good, nothing will shine more brightly upon their crowned heads than the simplicity of their devotedness. . . .

If, moved by friendship and compassion for your secret wounds, I desire to persuade you to be chaste, would I say to you that it is your interest? Your interest! Doubtless, you know well that in abandoning yourself without restraint to the thirst of the senses you will bring upon yourself shameful infirmities, to be followed by a premature death. But as there is an art of directing the acquisition of an unjust fortune, is there not also an art of directing the wants and the luxury of the passions? Is there not an art of sparing the senses while satisfying them; of preserving upon the lips and in the eyes the dignity of a pure man, while tasting

the delights of evil? The world does not say to the young man: "Wallow in the mire." It says to him, "Have the wisdom of vice. Know that pleasure is a rare and delicate plant which soon fades; do not fall into the error of withering it in a day; guard it as a divinity which nature has placed within you; drink with moderation, and pour a libation to the gods, so as to check yourself at the point where infamy succeeds enjoyment, and death punishes the excesses of life." Behold the language of the world, and how it covers with veils and flowers and with a nuptial wreath all the corruptions and all the powers of voluptuousness. But if some young soul has moved my heart to tenderness, and if I desire to cause the deceitful cup of evil to fall from his hands, I will say to him: "My friend, child of your mother and brother of your sister; child of your mother, who has brought you forth in the sacred continence of marriage; brother of your sister, whose virtue you guard and breathe; ah! dishonour not in yourself that great good which has made you man. Be chaste, my friend, preserve in frail flesh the honour of your soul, the religious source whence life gushes forth and whence love blooms. Prepare for your future marriage holy affection, endearments which heaven and earth may bless; be chaste, that you may love long, and that you may be loved always. There is upon this earth, between your mother and your sister, between your ancestors and your posterity, a fragile and gentle creature who is destined for you by God. Hidden from all eyes, she nourishes in silence the fidelity which she will promise to you; already she lives for you whom she knows not, she immolates for you her inclinations, she

reproaches herself with everything that might one day contravene the least of your desires: ah! guard for her your heart as she guards hers for you; bring her not ruins in exchange for her youth; and as she sacrifices herself for you by an anticipatory love, offer to this same love, in the intricacies of your passions, a just and generous sacrifice."

Such is the language which is potent to incite to virtue. And what if I spoke to you of virtue elevated to heroism? What interest, for example, animated that Chinese martyr of whom the executioner asked money to cut off his head with one stroke, and who replied: "Cut it off with as many strokes as you please; so it falls, that is enough; as to my money, I prefer leaving it to the poor?" What interest animated Regulus, when, having returned from Carthage to Rome upon parole, he advised the senate not to make peace after a defeat, although in offering this advice he braved an inexorable and degrading punishment? But I grow weary, and I weary you with these questions. Let there be an end then, once for all, of the idea of interest applied to the accomplishment of duty! Between duty and interest there exists the same relation as between Regulus and his executioners, between Rome and Carthage: Carthage was a shop, Rome was the Capitol, the mistress of the world.—*61st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXIII

The First Assault of Error

YOU are clothed with the virile robe of truth. Error is free to appear and assail you in its turn. How much soever you may be loved, you can no longer be preserved from its attacks. It exists, it is a power, and you, you are a free being, claiming your liberty as a necessary peril and an acknowledged right. Recall to your mind the hour. Negation and blasphemy did not spring up within you by spontaneous generation; the serpent was presented to you, as to Cleopatra, in a vase of flowers. I say, designedly, the serpent; it is the expression with which the Scriptures brand the perverse intelligence which abuses its gifts to deceive another while urging him to evil. Who was the serpent in your case? Who inflicted the first wound on your soul? Alas! A man whom you admired, perhaps a book. You opened by chance one of those books to which thought imparts its immortality; you read there doubt, mockery, hatred of God disguised as love for man. It was enough; the brilliancy of the style, and all that glory which radiates from a book, dazzled your heart. You consented to despise what your mother adored, to bend the knee before what she despised. Wherefore? Did that book love you? Did it give you proofs that it had your good at heart? No; but it was eloquent, superior to you in age, in science, and in reason. It conquered you. And nevertheless, you and I—for I do not separate myself from you in this sad

history—nevertheless, we drew vanity from ou defeat, and it seemed to us, while surrenderin ourselves, body and soul, to the seduction of on unknown, that we were about to become mer Children, whom Hercules put into his sling an cast into the sea like Lichas, we were please with the fall and the abyss, and from the mids of the waves, with eyes fixed afar off upon ou insolent conqueror, we addressed to him, in th simplicity of new-born pride, the insensate cry Hercules, thou hast conquered us, but it is t make us great as thyself.—*62nd Conference Notre-Dame.*

LXXIV

Machiavellism

ABOUT thirty years of age, having nearly attaine the plenitude of his faculties, still young, but les susceptible, man begins to turn his eyes toward a new horizon. He aspires to public life, be it i order to fill with the interests of important even the void created by experience, be it a cravin for the satisfaction resulting from the exercis of great influence, be it the desire of contributin to the common good the aid of his enlighte ment and his probity. This ambition is in itse the offspring of nature, and involves no more tha human generosity. Public life is one of man legitimate objects, and when its source is dried u amid a people, we see character become gradual debased for want of a theatre for the manly virtu of patriotism. Pagan antiquity has thereby, no withstanding all that was wanting to it in th domain of the supernatural, cast a halo arour its history in those countries which possesse

a forum, and still exacts the admiration of us Christians for the deeds of its heroes. The first instinct of man, when entering upon public life, is self-sacrifice. There is in the affairs of a people a religious elevation which touches the soul and inspires it with holy thoughts. We feel ourselves responsible, like Providence, for the indefinite future of a long posterity of men; and this spectacle, present to the mind, calls forth at once the emotions of conscience and the aspirations of pride. But here, as elsewhere, evil has its prophets and its temptation. By the side of Cincinnatus appears Catiline; not far from Aristides we find Verres or Machiavelli. Machiavelli is the man who has had the sad honour of erecting into a system and an art the egotistical employment of power, and his name has become in the political order the name, pre-eminently, of the tempter spirit. Machiavelli, then, is by the side of the young patrician. "Take care," he says to him, "and understand well what you are about to do. Country, liberty, justice, these are illustrious names, but names which serve the ambitious, who cover themselves with their *éclat*, more than the republic. Deceive not yourself, the world is for the cunning, and not for the generous. The world is a crowd which serves as a stepping-stone to a few, and right is but the disguise of the strong in presence of the weak, a reply to the vanquished, the rearguard of success. Success is everything. And success being ever on the side of the stronger, learn, in the conjunctures of time and of affairs, to distinguish where power resides, and with it the future. If the future fulfil not your expectations, make it not a point of honour to be obstinate

in error; sacrifice Anthony, and flee to Augustus; one never arrives too late at the camp of the victorious. Let not the words inconstancy and treason impede you; one is not a traitor because he stands still, nor inconstant because he keeps pace with fortune."

You will not accuse me of incorrectly translating Machiavelli; so many politicians translate him in their acts that it is difficult to err in translating him in a discourse. His poisoned darts are the last which assail conscience, and they nearly always wound it incurably, because nothing remains to it in the order of nature to enable it to renew its youth and vigour. The errors of childhood have their remedy in the light and the generosity of youth; those of youth are reformed in the school of experience; but man in his prime has before him but the ice of age, a time which is no longer that of inspirations, and in which the soul has only strength to retain the virtues which she has always cultivated. Therefore it is that the corruption of the character by political egotism is the consummation of evil, its supreme term, and, as it were, the seal of a lost creature. So long as character is safe, humanity still subsists, and one may say: If I have disregarded truth, if I have sacrificed too much to the desires of the senses, at all events I have not bartered my country to satisfy my ambition; I have not been found, for the wages of shame, cringing at the feet of crowned injustice, prostituting for it my voice, changing at its will ideas and friendships. I have remained sensible of the interests which are those of all; and, culpable towards God and towards myself, I have respected human nature in respecting my public duties.—*Ibid.*

LXXV

The Responsibility of Being

YOUR life is an expansive source of good or evil. Your acts are destined to the glory or to the misfortune of proselytism, according as God or your passions are their motive power and end. You cannot, whatever you do, exempt yourself from the operation of this law of the moral order, and no matter what may be the obscurity in which your days are passed, their beams, be they beneficent or evil, will be reflected by long generations. Of a movement originated by a free creature nothing is lost, and, cold in the tomb, he survives in the immortality of the lessons which he has imparted. This responsibility is not the exclusive heritage of celebrated men, of those whom the many have regarded from afar; all of us, even the most obscure, contribute a little to the pitiful clay of humanity. There it kneads its destinies, and we find it some day, a cause of joy or of remorse, in the condemnation or the salvation of multitudes. The Rhine, at its birthplace, might be enclosed in the hand of a child; arrived at its term, the ocean alone can contain it. Who would not be moved by so grand a perspective? Who would not be elevated above himself by the consciousness of so great a power? A word has lost the human race, another word has saved it. We must transmit the one or the other to our posterity, casting in with it the weight of our life. Happy they who will choose aright! Happy the man whose death is about to seal all his acts, and who can say: "I have passed through life,

and have left behind me no bitter memories; I have added nothing to the miseries of my fathers or to the miseries of my posterity!"—*Ibid.*

LXXVI

Why hath God Commanded?

At the dawn of history, what existed? God and man. What society was in operation? The society of God and man. What was to be ruined there? This very society, and nothing more. The interrogation in the mouth of the tempter should of necessity be directed against God, that is to say, against the primordial and universal foundation of all. Let us listen to him: "Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree of Paradise?"* The question might have been more profound, and been directed against the very existence of God. But atheism was no more possible then than to-day. Man had seen God as he sees Him still, the very source of his intelligence, the necessary principle of all truth, of all justice, of all reason, of every inanimate and living being. He had seen Him, as he sees Him still, in a positive revelation which permitted him not to confound the divine person and action with any other person or any other action. God was to man as present as the universe; and if the spirit of evil had called in question God's existence, he would have overlooked the primary rule of all temptation, which is to be plausible in order to be efficacious. But although man was assured, to the exclusion of doubt, that he had a Creator, he had not the

* Gen. iii, 1.

same knowledge of the motives which directed the counsels of that Creator. God *inhabiteth light*, said the Apostle St Paul, but a *light inaccessible;* * He is at once evident and impenetrable. No matter how certain we may be of His existence, we may always, as regards His orders or His designs, say to ourselves or understand this fatal word: Why? In this sense it was pronounced by the spirit who laid siege to humanity in its cradle. He did not ask man: Are you sure that there is a God? He asked him: Why hath God commanded you? And this question which he then proposed is that which he proposes to-day, that which he will ever propose; to-day, as then, the question of ruin is the question which envelops in doubt the authority of God. Look around you, upon the *débris* that compose the fragile order amid which we live: who has caused them? What hand has destroyed the ancient edifice wherein Europe, seated in unity, recognized laws and powers sacred for all? Whence comes it that the peoples are agitated and broken as waves which know not their course, and that subjects with their chiefs, moved by a common fear, await in anxiety some dark and inexplicable future? You reply to me that Europe is thus tormented because it has lost the anchor of authority: but why has it lost it? Why does the brow of Christian kings no longer bear the mild aureola with which Christ, on the day of His death, encircled it? Why has respect vanished from all hearts, and why does the hand of the young man touch with impious virility the hand of the old? Ah! too well do I know the reason; and who knows it not, save those blind men who

* 1 Tim. vi, 16.

deprive themselves of vision rather than see the truth? The voice of sophists, conspiring with that of princes, has sapped divine authority in the world; man has believed himself strong enough to reign alone over man. He has believed that his power would be greater if it emanated from himself, his liberty truer if it were limited only by laws revokable at his pleasure; and, in his ardour, freeing himself of all dependence, he has broken the link which attached terrestial things to the pole of heaven. For a time human power seemed in fact boundless, and it was said of kings, as is written of Alexander in the first book of Maccabees, that the earth was silent before them. The faith in divine authority, which still subsisted, consecrated even those who no longer recognized it, and presented them, whether they willed it or not, to the free veneration of souls. But, according as it became weakened, the prestige of human authority was also weakened, until no countenance has retained a trace of it, and the youngest child asks himself why he should obey. Such is our history, and it was that of Adam. He heard as we do the question which is the principle of all evil and of all ruin: Why hath God commanded you? Why are you not supreme?—*63rd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXVII

Negation

I WOULD not now pause to show you the criminality of negation were it not necessary to point out to you how this intellectual process is vicious in itself, and bears of its own nature poisonous

fruits. This appears to be a strange statement, as negation, it may be said, is a logical form as legitimate as affirmation. What harm is it to deny that which we consider not proven? Is not the burden of proof on affirmation, and is it not sufficient simply to deny what is merely affirmed? Doubtless, and I admit it, every affirmation is not a truth; but affirmation is the form of truth, whilst negation is nothing but the resistance of a mind. But the world lives not on resistance, it lives on certitudes, which are at least presumed, and when it is in possession of a doctrine which imparts to it the reason of its duties and the courage of its sufferings, it is a crime to disturb it by an arbitrary negation which wrests from it the foundations of its existence without giving it a substitute. It does not, then, lie on affirmation to put forward its proof, but on negation. For instance, humanity believes in God, in a supreme power, wisdom and goodness, which it does not represent to itself always and everywhere with the same clearness, but the ever-present idea of which, although more or less imperfect, has nowhere abandoned it. Should a child rise up in the midst of the people and deny the existence of God, think you that it would be necessary to demonstrate it to him? For my part, I think not. I think that it is for him to prove that there is no God. It is for you, I would say to him, for you, the last comer of the ages, for you, whom your mother has nursed in the name of God, for you, whose existence has been protected by this sovereign name, and to which it is indebted for the justice and the tenderness with which it was environed before it merited aught, it is for you to prove to the world that its belief in the divinity has no foundation. The world has lived, it still

lives, in this belief, it has found in it alone the principle of its duties and the justification of its rights; it has never been able to understand whence life could descend, if it come not from the primitive ocean it calls God, and wherein it has cast the anchor of an invincible hope and an immortal faith. It pleases you to go forth from this communion of minds, to deny your heavenly Father as well as your temporal fathers, to brave the horror which the mere suspicion of atheism has always excited. You may do this, I admit, but I await your proofs. You have them surely, and they are irrefragable, not mere doubts, uncertain lights, probabilities, but great as the idea of God and the faith of the universe. I await them: speak; and if you say nothing to me, if you confine yourself to conjectures, to the state of your soul which gives not back to you the echo of divine things, I will be silent in my turn. You complain that you do not hear the voice which the whole earth hears, that you do not see the light which every intelligence sees.

What I say of the existence of God, I say also of the Catholic Church and of her doctrine. You assert that you do not get sufficient proof of their truth; but do you consider that the Catholic Church exists? Could she present to you neither the prophecies which have prepared her, nor the miracles which have introduced her to the world, neither the chain of events which links her to all that is true in history, nor the visible divinity of her Founder, she exists nevertheless, and a portion of humanity lives in her and by her. She has formed men and societies; nay more, she has created virtues. And you think it is sufficient to deny her, in order to be tranquil with your conscience and with the judgments of God!

You ask her to prove to you her legitimacy! It is for you to prove that you are worthy to comprehend her and be reckoned amongst her children. It is for you to establish that your intelligence commands a horizon more vast than hers, that your thoughts have realized in the world more good than hers, that your virtues are greater, your manners more chaste, your authority higher, and that you alone, the being of one day and one idea, counterbalance the ages and the place which she occupies here below. If you do not this, she will be silent. She will have at least the right to be silent. When the Arab, passing at the foot of the pyramids, hurls at them his lance, the pyramids are silent.—*Ibid.*

LXXVIII

The Credulity of Unbelief

THE mind being made for truth is affirmative by nature. If it lose the affirmations which have their foundations in God, it surrenders itself easily to the first which are presented to it and bear the stamp of genius, of boldness, or of novelty. The intelligence, enfeebled by the subtraction of its natural sustenance, which are the just and the true, resembles a sea deprived of the tribute of its rivers, and whose diminished waters receive with avidity the impure slime which chance streams bring to it here and there. Everything is good to him who has nothing, and the more profound has been the negation in the mind, the more accessible it is to the seduction of the absurd, so that there is no credulity equal to that of an unbeliever. "They will heap to

themselves," says St Paul, "teachers, having itching ears, and will indeed turn away their hearing from the truth, and will be turned unto fables."* The man who believes not in God believes in a dream; he who believes no longer in Jesus Christ believes in Voltaire. The first system put forward as the origin of things, from the reveries of the Agnostics to the theories of Buffon, finds him ready to exclaim: "How marvellous!" Tell him that from all eternity there existed an infinite void, peopled with innumerable atoms—he will believe it. Tell him that the atoms, concurring in the void by virtue of a reciprocal attraction, met at length and united, forming the first sun—he will believe it. Tell him that this sun, suspended in space, experienced the effect of an impulsion which determined the orbit in which his mass revolves—he will believe it. Tell him that some fragments, becoming detached by the rotation, this sun retained them around him at a certain distance, at once attracting them and repelling them, thus making them his satellites, whose movements are correlative with his—he will believe it. Tell him that one of these inferior globes, becoming somewhat cooler, attained the temperature of fecundity, and produced plants, trees, then animals of greater and greater perfection, and finally man—he will believe it. Tell him that the temperature of the earth, becoming subsequently still lower, has lost its primitive energy of production, and has no longer any power save that of sustaining the species already emitted, without the faculty of emitting even one new species—he will believe it. Tell him anything you like, save that God created the world,

* 2 Tim. iv, 3, 4.

and he will believe it. His faith will be always proportioned to the ardour of his incredulity; and if he hate God and the Gospel, there is nothing monstrous that issues from the mouth of the impious that he will not receive with a frenzy of adhesion. If you desire to give him proofs, he will tell you there is no need, and that the thing is self-evident.

O you, then, born in an unbelieving age, and who aspire to the glory of founding a doctrine, trouble yourselves no more with the thought that it will not listen to so mediocre a project! If nature has bestowed on you the gift of speaking or of writing, it is enough; and it is not certain that a pen or a tongue of gold is necessary; lead has often succeeded. Make merry with your friends, and tell this proud age of what you please, the dream which you had yesterday, or that which you will have to-morrow. It asks no more to believe in you, to love you, to admire you, to call you immortal while you live, and to raise to you a statue when you die.—*Ibid.*

LXXIX

A Warning to France

BOSSUET, depicting somewhere the fall of the Roman empire, uses the words: "Rome laughs, and dies." That is indeed sublime, and worthy of Bossuet. Nevertheless, I know not whether it would not have been better had he said: "Rome feasts and dies." For laughter is but the accident of human things, and does not perhaps sufficiently express the abject materialism into which the man separated from God is precipi-

tated. *Comedit:* it is the word wherewith the Scripture closes the narrative of the first moral revolution of humanity, a word most striking in its baseness, and which is found in all that perishes. Balthazar feasted when the empire of the Chaldeans fell beneath the sword of Cyrus; he held in his hand the cup taken from the sacrifices of the true God, the sacrilegious cup containing together negation and voluptuousness, when the prophetic finger wrote upon the wall before his face, the hour and the cause of his condemnation. Thus ended Babylon in a feast; thus Rome passed away in another feast; thus all empires die, cup in hand and blasphemy on the lips. Thus, Frenchmen, will yours perish if you hearken not to the truths which speak to you still, if the walls of the Gospel, half ruined by you, rise not to give you shelter. Neither your sciences, nor your arts, nor the formidable development of your material power, wherewith you believe yourselves assured of influencing men, nothing of all this will retard for one quarter of an hour the advent of your fall brought on by your corruption. Cyrus—I know not who Cyrus will be; but Cyrus, a new man, believing in God, bearing in one hand the sword, and in the other the pen which will write the decree to rebuild the temple—Cyrus will dry up once again the waters of the Euphrates, will overturn the walls of Babylon, and dash to earth with a final blow the cup and the life of Balthazar. All this will be accomplished in the hour of a night when you will eat and drink like the children of men at the time of the deluge, like the children of Israel when the son of Vespasian scaled the walls of circumvallation. The same hour will find you at the same table, the same thunderbolt in the

same wine. New generations, marking your doubts and your negations, will come and say: We come in the name of God, who made heaven. Lost races, impure remains of an abject materialism, O rottenness! hearken, attend to the voice of those who bring you truth, justice, belief, certitude, with the ancient name of God; arise, live again, if it be possible; share the victory with us, if there remain in you sufficient strength to bless in your conquerors the hand of God who has chastised you, and who joins with chastisement resurrection.—*Ibid.*

LXXX

The Preponderance of Evil in Man

THE tissue of human life is composed of two sorts of actions. The one inspires esteem, respect, admiration, and love; the other engenders aversion, contempt, and even horror. When I recall to you Titus, saying one evening to his courtiers, or rather to his friends, for such was the name he gave them: "My friends, I have lost a day, for to-day I have done good to no one," you feel moved, and passing over the ages with quick impulse, you swell with your voice the unanimous voice of the Roman people giving to their best Cæsar the most beautiful name that man has ever borne, the name of "the Delight of the human race!" But when I recall to you that other Cæsar, sending a murderer to intercept his mother, just saved from a shipwreck, and that mother saying to the assassin: "Strike the womb!" you will utter a cry, and you will add your malediction to the malediction

which weighs upon the monster. And nevertheless, Nero was a man as well as Titus; his parricide was the thought and will of a man, as was the effusion of Titus regretting one of his days wherein the occasion for good had not been offered to him. But which think you ought to be the more frequent amongst us, acts which assimilate us to Titus, or those which assimilate us to Nero? acts which inspire us with pious respect, or those which engender indignation and contempt? One would think the former ought to be, since involuntarily we agree in honouring them; but, alas! it is not so. Vice is common, virtue is rare. Comparing good with evil, such as they present themselves to all of us in our history, we at once remark in evil a strange and terrible preponderance of facility. Evil costs us nothing; to commit it, we have but to let ourselves go. It is a ship which needs nor sails, nor oars, nor any effort, not even a tempest, for it has in itself its winds, its waves, its impetus, and its hurricane. Good, on the contrary, is not born of our soul without painful travail; a frail and ill-equipped vessel, it must sail against the waves, and, having opposed to it all the forces of sky and sea, it must go on its way without slackening speed. Virtue is so difficult that we have called it virtue, that is to say, force *par excellence*, and that in everything it is eminently distinguished as man's supreme effort. Outside it all is easy —birth, fortune, talent, success, even glory; and he who possesses all does not yet possess this. The very day a prince mounts the throne, he will have around him, to choose from as instruments of his reign, men of different degrees of merit and renown; but if God has given him

wisdom by one of those benedictions which sometimes console the earth, he will discern at the first glance a void in the midst of his courtiers; and, evening being come, he will go, clad in humble garb, and knock at the door of a good man to beg of him, in the name of God and of his country, to bring to him the rare succour of disinterested virtue. What is wanting to us in this great French empire?* Is it men of wit, is it literature, the arts, the sciences, fertility of soil, beauty of scenery, and excellence of harbours? No; heaven has exhausted for us the mystery of its gifts; no people has received more, and yet, no people is less the master of its destiny. What, then, is wanting to us? One thing only, virtue. And in every age, when we listen in silence to the solemn voice of history, the soul is warned that the passions are dominant, and that virtue is of short duration, and has but few heroes.

There is then in us certainly, a preponderance of evil over good by reason of facility; I will add, by reason of spontaneousness. Evil needs no culture; it springs up without preparation, like weeds in neglected soil. Leave the child to the natural course of his instincts, and what will he become? An egotist, a despot, a little monster, who, after having used his weakness against his nurse and his mother, will use his strength against the companions of his age and pleasures, until, arrived at the maturity of vice, he presents a spectacle lower than that exhibited by the savage, the spectacle of pure animality, feeding on debauchery and cruelty. You must needs, you must needs, check him early, chastise his tyranny, teach him that he

* 1850.

has duties before rights; you must needs bow his head and bend his knees; he must humble himself, he must ask pardon for his faults, he must weep for having offended, he must undergo perseveringly the instruction of the rod and the initiation of love, and thus humbled, encouraged, repressed, moulded, caressed, he must arrive at the fellowship of men, if not perfectly gentle and amiable, at least smoothed like the marble just come from the mind and the chisel of the sculptor. Without education there can be no civilization, for man is by nature a barbarian, and goodness is developed in him by profound culture alone, an art requiring the union of angelic tenderness with vigorous virtue. Woe to the empire which knows not how to bring up its children! woe to the empire which confuses teaching with education, which thinks that good springs from science and literature, whatever they may be, and that to string together high-sounding words is to prepare the soul of the man and the citizen! Education is the tradition of obedience, of reverence, and of devotedness, to a soul impatient of the yoke and frozen by egotism, a sublime tradition for whose absence nothing can compensate, and the necessity for which proves convincingly the spontaneous preponderance of evil over good. 64*th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXXI

Original Sin

I HAVE proved two things: first, that sin produces in man a permanent state of disorder, which affects, substantially, his soul and his body; second, that this state of disorder is

transmissible hereditarily in a physiological manner, that is to say, as a malady, in virtue of general laws which govern the soul and the body in the work of paternity. This is much, and yet it is not all; for this malady of sin is imputed to the victim who receives it without willing it, who undergoes it as a necessary condition of his birth, without the option of giving or refusing his consent. How can this be? How, in the eyes of sovereign justice, is fallen man aught else but an unfortunate being? He has lost God through the crime of his first father, as we are taught; God, who gave Himself gratuitously, could retire gratuitously from the race of the sinner and abandon it to the lasting effects of a corruption which came not from it. But to call this race itself sinful, to impute its misery to crime and its loss to chastisement, this it is which confounds our heart, such as God Himself has made it. It is true, as you have told us, that original sin is not punished in the posterity of Adam as a personal fault, which is all very well, but, nevertheless, it is punished. Wherefore? On what principle? It is a simple privation, as you have also told us, and even a privation which does not entail any suffering on the soul, because the soul, not having received the seed of eternal good, is incapable of knowing and feeling what it has lost. Yes, but nevertheless it is a punishment, and it is because of a fault that God keeps at a distance from Him children whom He made for Himself. How does this fault, how little so ever it may be, descend through all humanity?

I can only reply to you by a single word, a celebrated word, without which it is impossible to understand the history of man and of God's justice, a word which is of all languages; that

word is—solidarity. What does it mean? It necessarily means something, and something true, without which it would not exist. Solidarity, as mankind has ever known and understood it, is a community of merits and demerits, of glory and of shame, between beings bound together by a principle of unity. Wherever there is unity, there is moral community, and moral community is solidarity. Thus, between the soul and the body, different as they are, there exists a bond which constitutes them one person. This being so, the body, although incapable of good and evil, and consequently of responsibility, is nevertheless accountable for the free acts of the soul, and we find no legislator so foolish as to say: The soul alone is culpable, the soul alone ought to be punished. And do not think that the body is assailed because the soul cannot be assailed directly; no, this is not the common notion. In punishing the body of the culprit, human justice designs an act of justice in its totality, and not an act which passes by the innocent to reach the criminal. The soul alone, it is true, conceives the crime, alone it wills it, alone it commands it; but, indivisibly united with the body, it conceives, wills, commands, and executes only with the body. Community of life engenders moral community, and each member, being conjoined with all, is not astonished that punishment reaches even that which has not committed the fault, but which finds itself enveloped in an involuntary cooperation. The arm strikes, the head is answerable for it, and all applaud the verse of the Cid:

When the arm offends, the head is punished.

In like manner, and still more remarkably, there exists, in the bosom of the family, a prin-

ciple of unity which has its source in the transmission of blood, and as a consequence a solidarity the stronger as it is nearer the trunk whence it proceeds. Each family reckons as its patrimony the honour which it has received from its ancestors, and this honour encircles the head of the child just born, before even it is capable of lisping the word glory in naming its father. In vain will you protest against this dispensation of merit; in vain will you treat it as a baseless prejudice: the prejudice will subjugate yourself, and when there will be question of uniting your blood with that of another, your race with another race, you will esteem nothing more than this incomprehensible heritage of honour, as you will fear nothing more than meeting with a hereditary stain, were it in the most beloved object, and the worthiest of love. I ask you, your hand upon your heart, to say, would you espouse the daughter of a villain? Is there in the world a love which would persuade you to make such a dolorous present to your posterity? You would espouse misfortune, but never shame, and this judgment of your soul is sufficient for me against your reason. Your soul is right: the son is the blood, the life, the image, the continuation of the father; he perpetuates, although imperfectly, the course which has produced the evil, and finds opprobrium in the evil.

You will tell me that this condemnation is not hopeless, that there are examples of reversal of opinion, and that a solidarity of glory has been more than once raised upon a contrary solidarity. Yes, and who denies it? Personal merit may redeem original demerit, and transmitted dishonour is not as dishonour which comes from ourselves. Human justice, as well as divine

justice, distinguishes easily the difference, and is not mistaken as to the degree of responsibility. The primitive culprit is the true, the great culprit; the hereditary culprit, the victim of the blood he bears, is an unfortunate who is a prolongation of another, and equity shows him afar off the laborious piscina where in every great heart may put off the old man and rejuvenate its blood.

Above family unity and domestic solidarity, there is a unity more vast, which engenders a solidarity more profound: I speak of that of nations. A people is not a heterogeneous assemblage of some millions of men spread over a particular territory; it is the posterity of a patriarch who, from being the chief of a family and leader of a tribe, became the father of a numerous and powerful race, one in their laws, their manners, their institutions, their country, and their traditions. A people is a community which has but one soul and one history. A people is one; identical with itself through the whole course of the ages, it acts, according to the expression of the Scripture, as one man, adding to human affairs the weight of its mass and its unity. Therefore is it responsible as a people, and, since the people never begins or ends at any particular point, its responsibility envelops all the generations which compose it, and all the acts which constitute the sum of its life. Do you doubt it? Do you doubt that France bears in her bosom the conjoint tradition of all she has done in the world? Do you doubt that your name of people is a living reality which accompanies each Frenchman and recalls in him the memory of the faults and the virtues of his forefathers? Do you doubt the

common greatness which is in each of you, and do you value yourselves only according to your personal merit? The Roman said proudly: *Civis Romanus sum.* You speak like him, because you feel as he that a great people dwells in you. Yes, we live again in our ancestors by the blood which they have left to us, and our ancestors live again in us by this same blood which we owe to them. We were in Clovis, when, issuing forth from the austere forests of Germany, he cast across the Rhine the glance which promised to his race the possession of Gaul and the ruin of the Romans. We were in him when he listened to Clotilde within his tent, when he prayed at Tolbiac, when he bowed his head under the benediction of St Remi and the baptism of Christ. We were in Charlemagne crossing the Alps to avenge the outraged Papacy, and to establish its independence in the midst of new nations. We traversed the sea with Philip Augustus and St Louis to deliver the holy sepulchre. We were of the league which defended our ancient faith against the arms of heresy, and more recently still, we were found upon the scaffold where the blood of our fathers flowed to preserve the title and the rights of Christians. All these merits are ours, all these memories speak of us. From the vantage-ground of history, whence posterity looks upon them, France appears as their indivisible and subsisting cause; and from the height of heaven where God recompenses them, His justice crowns but one soul, and proclaims but one name.

These examples show us that solidarity is a general law of the world, and that if families and nations are subject to it, humanity itself,

in the person of Adam, who contained and represented it, must needs be subject to its action. As each of us bears the faults of his blood as members of a race and a people, we bear them also as a substantial part of the human race, with this difference, that the solidarities posterior to the primitive solidarity are necessarily restricted and imperfect, while primitive solidarity, being the principle of human responsibility, surpasses all its daughters in extent and profundity: in extent, for Adam is the only man who has included all men, who has transmitted to all of them without exception his blood, his form, and his life; in profundity, for he is the only one who, by his fault, has separated the human race from God. The subsequent faults of men, of families, and of peoples, find this separation accomplished, and can only add to it aggravation. No human creature, save Adam, has a right to say: I have lost the world; as no other than Jesus Christ has a right to say: I have saved the world. Adam opened the series of crimes, Jesus Christ the series of graces and virtues; each man adds to these two tables his own merits and demerits, and grafts the secondary solidarities upon the universal solidarity; but no one is the source, no one is the river, no one is the primordial unity whence proceeds the common loss or salvation.

You see then, why the hereditary transmission of the state of sin to the descendants of Adam is not only a misfortune but, in a way, a participation from which results a degree of imputability. God, in considering the human race before any reparation, sees not perpetual disorder alone, He also sees the permanent cause of this disorder, which is human nature itself, the

issue of Adam and one with him. This cause, it is true, is no longer as it was; the personality of Adam is no longer there, and is replaced by the personality of his descendants. Therefore it is that the state of sin in which they are is not imputed to them as to their first father, the sole integral cause of the separation of man from God. In Adam, the penalty is both privative and afflictive; in his posterity, it is but privative, without any suffering either of soul or of body. God remains withdrawn from man, who has withdrawn from Him: that is all.

But if this condition of things still appear to you hard, consider that the gift of God to man was gratuitous, supernatural, infinitely superior to every hope of a created being. Consider, in the second place, that the law of solidarity has not been established by God arbitrarily, but that it is the outcome of the very constitution of human unity, and that, in the plan of creation, it could but result in the communication and diffusion of good. It was man who corrupted the law of solidarity and made it an instrument for the propagation of evil; and, notwithstanding this corruption, the primary effect of the law still subsists. Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, has employed it to apply to the whole human race the expiatory merit of His life and death; if solidarity has been our ruin, it is solidarity which saves us, and the good which results from it surpasses the evil which is the fruit of it. Therefore it is that St Paul does not hesitate to say: "But not as the offence, so also the gift. For if by the offence of one many died: much more the grace of God and the gift, by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."* And

* Rom. v, 15.

before, in the old law, amid the thunders of Sinai, God said to His people: "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me: and showing mercy unto thousands to them that love Me, and keep My commandments."* Memorable words, which show how, from the same law whence issues good and evil, God can draw more satisfaction for mercy than for justice.

Let us do the same. Whatever may be our vain reasonings, being fathers in our turn, we bear within our hearts the destiny of those who will be our offspring. Sons of a solidarity whose power extends back beyond our cradle, we create another for the generations who will inherit our life. Each one of our thoughts, each one of our acts, vibrates already in our posterity, and the ages to come will accuse our faults in their misfortunes, as they will praise our virtues in their own benedictions. Active solidarity succeeds in our regard to passive solidarity, and what reason concealed from us devotedness reveals to us. Men, fathers, citizens—each of these names warns us that you are not alone by yourself, but that your soul is a world whence other souls will draw indefinitely their life, their traditions, and their lot. Verily, I tremble like you at the thought; I feel this double burden which overwhelms me—in the past and in the future—in the past by my forefathers, in the future by my posterity. For I also, I have a posterity; it issues from my lips with the word of God; it will call me to account one day for the grace that was given me to beget sons in Jesus Christ. But how heavy soever upon

* Exod. xx, 5, 6.

my shoulders may be the burden of the past and the burden of the future, the burden of what was not yet I, and the burden of what will be no longer I, child and father, I do not condemn the law which has extended my responsibility beyond the narrow limit of my person and my age. I do justice to God, my first ancestor, to Adam, who was my ancestor after God, to all those who have woven from their acts and from their thoughts the complicated thread of my short life. They have brought me good and ill; but what would I be without them? A reed lost in the solitude, a drop of rain, a grain of dust having no kinship with the dust itself; a stranger to all, save to myself, I would have passed through life all alone with my soul and my body, a mystery of egotism and impotence, having nothing to weep for, nothing to bless. Oh! leave me such as I am; take not from me love and dignity in taking from me my burden. Leave me my part in the humanity of the past and the humanity of the future: I accept it. Responsible to the world, the world is also responsible to me; I bear with the world, and it bears with me; it has prepared my lot, and I labour at its lot. Solidarity, it is the life of all in all; it is power in weakness, extent in bounds, immortality in death, good in evil, God in man, and man in God. For God has Himself entered into it; loving this sublime law, He has imparted to it His divinity, he has cast into the balance of universal responsibility His glory and His blood. You will see it soon; you see it already. And I, son of this all-powerful solidarity, brother and co-heir of the Man-God, I no longer feel strength, in face of such a benefit from such a cause, to accuse or to defend

eternal justice; I prostrate myself at the foot of the cross which has saved me by a merit other than mine, and my last words are acts of thanksgiving and adoration.—*65th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXXII

Dupuytren and the Cure

THIS generation* still recalls the celebrity enjoyed, a quarter of a century ago, by a man who brought to the practice of surgery an intrepidity of soul as rare as the precision of his hand. This man, now old, saw enter his study a priest of simple, grave, and gentle aspect, whom he easily recognized as a country curé. After having listened to and questioned him for some minutes, he said in a brusque tone, which was natural to him: "Monsieur le Curé, people die of that." The curé replied: "You might have told me the truth, doctor, with less directness; for, although advanced in life, there are men of my age who fear to die. But, however it may be told, the truth is always precious, and I thank you for not concealing it from me." Then laying on the table a five-franc piece which he had ready, he added: "I am more ashamed than I can tell to show my gratitude so inadequately to such a man as Dr Dupuytren; but I am poor, and there are many poor in my parish; I return to die in the midst of them." These words went to the heart of the man whom the cry of pain had never moved. He felt a struggle within him, and, going after the old man towards whom he had just exhibited such indifference, he called to him from his door, and said he would see what he

* 1851.

could do for him. The operation took place. It reached the most delicate organs of life; it was long and painful. But the patient bore it with unalterable serenity; and when the astonished operator asked him whether he had felt no pain, "I suffered," he replied, "but I thought of something which did me good." He was unwilling to say to him: I thought of Jesus Christ, my Master and my God, crucified for my sake. He feared to wound the incredulity of his benefactor, and, hiding his faith beneath a veil of the most amiable modesty, he said to him only: I thought of something which did me good. Many months afterwards, on a fine summer's day, Dr Dupuytren was at the Hôtel-Dieu, surrounded by his pupils, during one of his hours of attendance. He saw in the distance the old priest, perspiring and dusty, like a man who had travelled a long way on foot, and bearing on his arm a heavy basket. "Doctor," said the old man, "I am the poor country curé on whom you operated, and whom you cured many weeks ago; never have I enjoyed better health than now, and I was desirous of proving it to you by myself bringing you fruit from my garden, which I pray you to accept in memory of a marvellous cure which you effected, and of a good action which God will not forget for you." Dupuytren took the old man's hand; it was the third time that the same man had moved the depths of his soul.

Finally, this illustrious man, Dr Dupuytren, was on his deathbed, and as he had discerned the peril of so many others, so did he discern his own. That hour found him firm; he had had too much glory to regret this world and not estimate its nothingness. But the revelation of the insignificance of life is not enough to enlighten

the soul as to her destiny, and perhaps it is the gravest peril of pride when struggling with death. It is necessary in that supreme moment to apprehend both the misery and the greatness of man; and if genius can rise above itself to the consciousness of its misery, it cannot at the same time comprehend its greatness. This double secret is both united and manifested only in a light which comes from a source higher than glory. Dupuytren saw it come. While revolving in his memory scenes at which he had assisted, amidst so many figures which passed one after another before his failing vision, there was one which grew ever more and more distinct, and whose simplicity, full of grace, recalled to him sentiments which he had nowhere else experienced. The old country curé remained present to his soul, and the constant and consoling apparition cheered the narrow vestibule of death. It is needless to tell you the rest. Dupuytren hung over the abysses of truth, and to descend there living he had but to fall into the arms of a friend. It is the gift which God has given to men from the day when He stretched forth to them His hands from the elevation of the cross, the gift of receiving life from a soul which has possessed it before ourselves, and which pours it into ours because it loves us. Dupuytren had this happiness. At the close of a memorable career, he saw that there was something conferring more happiness than success, and greater than glory: the certitude of having a God for Father, a soul capable of knowing and loving Him, a Redeemer who has given His blood for us, and, in fine, the joy of dying eternally reconciled with truth, justice, and peace. Providence governs the world, and its chief minister—you have just heard of it,

and for this you owe to God never-ceasing thanks —its chief minister is virtue.—*67th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXXIII

Love Justice

HOWSOEVER you may be called—be it now or be it at a future day—to the government of men, forget not to love justice, and never to sacrifice her. Make for her in your heart an asylum whither shall penetrate neither interest, nor passion, nor the engagements of party, where she may reign alone, and whence she may diffuse herself with incorruptible efficacy over all the actions of your life. You will often live in solitude with justice; events, stronger than the right, will bring you injury and irony. Fear nothing; let the outrage pass away with time. Sooner or later justice will uplift her bowed head; men, after banishing her, will return to her altars, and, finding you standing there with your hand in hers, they will place upon you the sign of admiration, that sign which is the more indelible inasmuch as it has been preceded by the buffets of ingratitude. But even should you never receive from men the reward of your inviolable rectitude, there would still remain to you a recompense which is enough of itself, that which buoyed up the heart of the great Pope Gregory the Seventh, dying at Salerno, and repeating to his conscience those beautiful words: "I have loved justice and hated iniquity, therefore I die in exile."—*68th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXXIV
The True Dowry

PERMIT me to offer an advice to those who have not yet bound their youthful liberty in the bonds of marriage. Let them understand distinctly that to ally themselves with a family is to ally themselves with benedictions or with maledictions, and that the true dowry is not that which the public officer mentions upon paper. The true dowry is known to God alone. But to a certain degree, from the experience of men, you also may know it. Seek not visible gold, but invisible gold; ascertain whether the blood which is about to be mingled with yours contains traditions of human and divine virtues, whether it has long been purified in the sacrifices of duty, whether the hand which you are about to receive has been joined to the other hand in invoking God, whether the knees which are to bend with yours before the altar have been accustomed and happy thus to humble themselves. See whether the soul is rich in God. Go back as far as possible in its hereditary history, that all its branches being explored as a mine wherein your destiny will take root in the past, you may know the worth in God's sight of this generation which was a stranger to you, and which is to be joined with yours and to become one in your posterity. If the aureola of sanctity is manifestly wanting, flee to the opposite pole, although the treasures of the world may be offered to you, and do not confound in an adulterous alliance a long record of benedictions

with a long record of maledictions. Alas! if so many wailings, stronger than shame, issue forth from the bosoms of families, it is because when forming them one day the dower of earth was counted, and no reckoning was made of the dower of heaven.—*69th Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXXV

Time does not Weaken the Passions

ABOVE all, avoid one error; say not: I will love God and serve Him at some future time; I will love Him and serve Him when the passion of the senses will have grown cold in my ardent breast. For in vain will you await that hour of peace; it comes not of itself and by the mere lapse of years. Time fortifies in beings that only which it finds in them, and if it finds vice, it seals it from day to day with a greater seal. Think not that the old man enjoys beneath his grey hairs the calm of a temperance which is as it were innate in him; that is true of the man who has resisted his passions from the dawn of his liberty, and who has made of them a road to heaven, the more secure as it cost him the more effort. But to the man who has basely abandoned the reins of his soul, who has reckoned upon age and not upon virtue, to such a man old age brings degradation, not deliverance. The forces of his will, relaxed by being long unaccustomed to rule, are impotent to govern him, and his intelligence, corrupted by the ever-recurring images of voluptuousness, causes to issue from his bones a vapour which intoxicates him, and permits him not to obtain even from sleep the purity denied

him by day. Turn not, then, your hopes towards time; time will bring to you but the maturity of your vices or of your virtues. Let the reign of things you love commence within you from this hour, the reign of good, if it be good which has indeed your love. This reign will cost you much. Youth is a time of intelligence, it is also a time of combat, but it is a fruitful combat wherein each victory will confirm you still more in the power to conquer, and sink the anchor of your destinies in the soil of eternity.—*Ibid.*

LXXXVI

The Last shall be First

ONE man comes into the world rich, powerful, the inheritor of a great name; another enters it at the same hour poor and despised. It is the law of inequality that manifests itself; but wait awhile. Soon the child of fortune forgets himself in the fascination of his birth; he vegetates between self-indulgence and adulation, incapable of applying his mind to wholesome studies and his soul to generous efforts. He surrenders himself to the tide of daily puerilities, to the caresses of his friends, to the zeal of his dependants, to the deceitful abundance of a life which costs him nothing in the present and menaces him with nothing for the future. By degrees his frame is enervated, and the son of ancestral heroes is no longer more than a good fellow, and a good fellow only in the eyes of those who seek not virtue in what they admire. The poor man, on the contrary, soon knows his

weaknesses and wants; he learns from the laborious life of his father the lot which Providence has appointed for him, and if faith preserve him from envy, as necessity preserves him from idleness, he accustoms his heart to thoughtfulness, his mind to severe culture, and makes of his labour a persevering preparation for a better future. Finally, he attains it, and his elevation occupies, on the unknown pages which contain the handwriting of Providence, the place which remained blank through the voluntary default of the son of Hannibal or the son of Scipio. Thus it is also in the supernatural order: a little grace fructifies in a soul which has been little favoured, whilst marvellous gifts come to nought in the depths of an ungrateful soul, spoiled by the very greatness of its election.—*Ibid.*

LXXXVII

The Wages of Sin is Death

THE next few passages are from the 71st Conference of Notre-Dame, entitled: "The Results of the Divine Government." Ozanam calls it "an event in the ecclesiastical history of our times."

YOU are young, your eyes radiate with the immortality of all that begins, and you feel in every fold of your flesh an obedience to your desires which permits you not to believe in the frailty of your years. Nevertheless, beware; beware, not of the lightning, but of sin. If you open your soul and your senses to this mysterious guest, it will, in secret, work ravages there, of which the evil consequences will soon appear upon your countenance. Precocious wrinkles

will spoil its chaste limpidity; the light of your glance will grow feeble beneath your heavy eyelids; your contracted lips will express but a sad and diminished smile; profanity will, by degrees, spread itself over your face, and will depict upon it the ruin of soul within. You will believe that you are alone with your conscience; but death is there with you, and it translates incessantly your debaucheries into an eloquent accusation. Every eye observes it. It is the sister of sin, and sin is its sting: "Now the sting of death is sin."* As the bull rushes along impelled by the dart which cleaves to him, so death hastens beneath the blows of sin: it infiltrates the veins and dries up the blood, it relaxes the vigour of the nerves, it penetrates the very bones and devours the substance of them, and, finally, it and sin seize one another in a last embrace, the corpse falls, and heaven and earth pass by with contempt; for there lies a man who has basely killed the life within him.

The same terrible mystery is accomplished in nations. Virtue founds them, vice lays them in the tomb. Neither antiquity nor greatness—nothing can save a corrupt people. It trails for a time upon the world's scene the ignoble remains of its history, sustained by the jealousy of its neighbours and that hidden force which upholds a ruined edifice; but sooner or later its moral decadence announces its fate. It comes, one knows not whence, from new and obscure races; they look from afar upon this worn-out empire, which seems still living by its functions, its magistrature, its armies, and its memories, which has no longer any substance or cohesion, because it has no longer any virtue. They say

* 1 Cor. xv, 56.

to one another: "Behold Rome!" and something replies to them: "Come, my Goths! come, my Parthians! Fear not the old purple which is still upon the shoulders of the mistress of the world, for it no longer covers Scipio, it covers only vice and death. Pass the Rhine, rush over the Danube, cross the Euphrates, spread upon the ground your skins of beasts, and throw into them your prey!"—*71st Conference of Notre-Dame.*

LXXXVIII

A Youth of Labour and an Age of Repose

THE man who has nothing to do in order to live but to live, and who applies not his faculties to the honourable glebe of voluntary labour, such a man falls, by rapid degrees, from languor into ennui, and from ennui into the disorders of the heart. It is only in advanced age, when we have paid our debts to labour, and life, diminished in all our senses, withdraws from us the throbbing waves of activity, it is then that repose becomes us, and that God blesses it. The repose of the old man is a right and a majesty. Seated at his fireside, he permits the modest recollection of the good which he has done to scintillate calmly in his memory, and he awakens virtue in another by the spectacle of the peace which crowns his years. But to repose when one has done nothing—to repose in youth, to consign to a precocious and continuous ease the soul and the body—is to prepare for them terrible corruptions. —*Ibid.*

LXXXIX

In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread

God took timely care to apply us to the noble gymnastics of a laborious activity; no sooner had we fallen than he pronounced against us the decree of labour, in those merciful words which we must never tire of repeating: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."* From that hour the decree has never ceased from being accomplished. In vain has civilization been formed; in vain have the arts of peace, commerce, industry, the economic inventions of science—in vain have they succeeded the devastations of war: nothing has been effectual in releasing man from the law of painful labour, and after sixty centuries of endeavour to diminish the burden, he can hardly flatter himself that he has achieved a perceptible success. Christianity, through the death of the Son of God, has retrenched the miseries of our lot; it has raised up the slave, the woman, the child, moderated power, given to our hearts those tears which soothe the sorrow of others; but it has not abated the resistance of the earth's cold surface or the ardour of the sun's rays. We have remained the subjects of labour that we may continue to be the brothers of virtue.—*Ibid.*

* Gen. iii, 19.

XC

The Peasant's Life

OFTEN, from a mountain's side, have I looked upon the fertile plains watered by the sweat of man; I have seen the labourer anticipate the dawn, and a multitude of women, of children, of old men and of young, their bodies inclined towards the earth, dig furrows in it, or gather from it the riches sown with their hands. I have seen them, after long hours, partake of a frugal repast under the narrow shade of a tree or of a fragment of wall, and when evening had come, return in fatigued groups to the hospitable threshold of their rustic homes. This spectacle has always moved me, it has always given me the idea that God looks upon it with pleasure; and that if all those souls are not pure in His sight, at least they do not offend Him without some compensation to His heart as a father and to His equity as a judge. Evil developing itself without restraint in the continuous fever of idleness is a different thing from evil repressed by days without repose and nights without illusions. The poetry of antiquity placed virtue beneath the thatch; it said that the gods, when they descended from Olympus, abode with pleasure in obscure valleys, by the corn-stacks raised by the peaceful hand of the husbandman. Wisdom has repeated, after another manner, these sentiments of poesy; and Christianity, while revealing to us the simple faith of the fields, permits us to say, in a more elevated sense than the Roman poet:

> O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint
> Agricolas! —*Ibid.*

XCI

How God fills the Ranks of the Saved

GOD might have decreed that no one should enter the kingdom of heaven who had not taken a personal part in the struggle of good and evil, and accepted the blood of His Son in the free plenitude of reason. He has willed the contrary. He has opened to children the gates of innocence and merit. He has said of them: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven." * And looking upon them at another time with, if possible, a still more beneficent eye, He said: "It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish." † What words in a mouth whence every word was truth and efficacy! From the creation of the world a special source of salvation had been prepared for the souls of children. As they suck their mothers' milk without knowing it, God has willed that they drink at the breasts of faith and charity without knowing either the one or the other, and that the blood of His Son should be shed for them drop by drop even before their eyes were opened, their ears heard, or their lips pronounced His name. In the ages which preceded the death of Christ and the promulgation of the Gospel, the children were *saved in the faith of their fathers*, God willing to regard them as one with them, and to attribute to the offspring the virtues which brought them into the world. But since the faith of man may fail

* Mark x, 14. † Matt. xviii, 14.

and thus betray the mercy of God towards souls newly created, His providence intervenes at the critical hour by confiding these souls to the indefectible faith of the Church, and commanding her to shed upon them by baptism the dew of faith and salvation. Then in order to consummate this mystery of ineffable bounty God made a pact with death, and, imparting to it a divine precocity, He charged it to cut off before the age of evil the third part of the human race. Often, in the course of our lives, we complain that we have lived too long, and we cry out with Job: "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to them that are in bitterness of soul?"* God has heard this cry, and, without regarding it as just, it has pleased Him to hear it for a very great number. The exterminating angel has become the right arm of Christ; he selects amongst us innocence before reason has tarnished its first brightness, and conducts multitudes to heaven to whom the cost of eternity is but to pass through here below and smile upon their mothers. Another portion, less numerous, it is true, survive until that happy age which precedes the puberty of the mind, but only to die at the frontier of another puberty, before the voice of passion is heard in the heart, and while reason in the greater number is still a docile light. If you desire to know the extent of this premature recruiting of souls, modern science will tell you: One-third of the children born die between the first and the seventh year after birth, more than half between the first and the fourteenth year.

You see, then, that even allowing for exceptions, nearly half the human race are saved

* Job iii, 20.

from the supreme misfortune of damnation in the strict sense, whether they drink the blood of redemption in the faith of their parents or at the font of baptism, or whether, strangers to these two means of salvation, they carry before God only the burden of original sin, and find in the asylum of limbo an existence which at least they do not regret. I grant that the inhabitants of limbo cannot be ranked with the elect of the divine life; for, if they took their place amongst them, the question of the number of the elect would be mathematically solved; but, without thus ranking them, it remains true that premature death aids the clemency of God even when it does not satisfy it completely.

To the grace of infancy, so particularly favourable to the salvation of men, there must be added the grace of sex. God, when taking from the side of man the companion of his days, and imposing upon her the duty of a constant subjection, compensated her by two precious gifts, the gift of faith and the gift of charity. He said to woman, when placing her in the world: Thou shalt believe and thou shalt love. Many snares have, doubtless, surrounded your mothers, calculated to wrest from them the honour of this vocation. But if I were to be wanting in respect towards them, if I insulted in them the eminence of the Christian character, you would avenge them in your hearts by recalling their virtues, and, despite of so many notorious falls, you would bear witness to the privilege of grace which was accorded to them. The young man, when he regards the world, may distrust woman: he can no longer do so when he regards his mother. The world corrupts all, even woman; but she escapes the world by two gates which

God has long opened to her: virginity and maternity. There is her throne, and this throne is still erect. If there are some who descend from it, and there are but too many, God has prepared aids so efficacious for them that they are easily reclaimed. Their youth is brief; as the flower withers, so withers the beauty which causes their ruin; they find themselves fallen almost as soon as they are queens, and their souls, disabused of man, who loves but for a day, return to the only Heart which contains an inextinguishable affection and is worthy of theirs. The eternal Beauty seeks them, and without restoring to their features a brilliancy which would again deceive them, He confers upon them the youth of a lively faith and an ardent charity. We see them, in their tender flesh, sustain the sharpness of penance, and they sometimes make it difficult to say which is the more precious, the virtue that has never perished or the virtue that has come forth from the tomb. Therefore it is that on two occasions words almost equally sublime have been addressed to woman in the Gospel of the Son of God: on one occasion they were heard by Mary the Virgin, on the other by Magdalene the sinner. To the one was said: "Hail, full of grace"; * of the other: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." †

But yet, whatever God may do, there remains man, man proud, obdurate, cold, a worshipper and slave of his reason, who believes with difficulty, who loves with still greater difficulty. What did God try in order to make easy in his favour the narrow way of salvation? Ah! what did God try? He has done more than try, He has succeeded. He has created the poor—I say

* Luke i, 28. † Ibid vii, 47.

the poor, and not the people, because I speak the language of the Gospel, a language more pure than that of men and which the passions never corrupt. The poor are those of us who gain their living from day to day by the labour of their hands, and who, strangers to the pride of riches, of science, and of power, secure in labour and dependence a perpetual auxiliary of the virtues which make a Christian. Like the child and the woman the poor man is naturally submissive, feeling the need of God, having no interest in cursing Him or despising Him. No other bears more assiduously upon his shoulders the cross of the Saviour; no one accomplishes better in his flesh the mortification of the Gospel; and so far as he consents piously to his sacrifice, he is the true penitent of the world, the holocaust which burns before God and recalls to Him incessantly the dolorous way which His only and well-beloved Son trod here below. The poor are they of whom Jesus Christ said: "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." * The poor are they of whom the apostle St James said: "Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?" †

I know that I shall be reproached with holding this language, as being inopportune: but what do you wish me to do? What is written is written. The misfortunes of our age cannot deprive me of the right or relieve me of the duty of justifying the ways of God, and if these ways are to-day confounded, who is responsible? Who has corrupted the poor? Who has transmitted

* Matt. xi, 25. † Jas. ii, 5.

even to them the sleep of indifference and the scoff of the impious? Who has formulated for them a science to disgust them with God, and another science to make them love the world? Is it my fault? Is it God's? The poor are too generally in a regrettable state; but this state is contrary to nature, it is the fruit of a long conspiracy of science and of power against Christianity; it is a reproach to men, and the tell-tale effects which result from it are a new justification of Providence, which impiety did not anticipate.

The child, the woman, the poor, that triple weakness and that triple life of humanity, these are the blessed of God; and what are the rest in comparison? What are the rest, even if all go into the abyss whence crime and sorrow never come forth? What are the rest, even although eternity do not glean a single soul? But such is far from being the case. Providence has destined particular graces for the most numerous portions of humanity, and such was Its right, and it was, moreover, a calculation of Its ineffable mercy; but it does not follow that It has abandoned to evil riches, science, and power, the magnificent and necessary crown of human nature. No, take care not to think so. After the Saviour had uttered those severe words: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" * He added immediately: "With men it is impossible, but not with God." †

And, indeed, all ages have often seen charity descend from the heights of opulence and ask of the poor, in exchange for temporal benefits, the compensation of prayer; they have seen kings touch with their lips the stigmata of the cross, and scholars humble their reason before the mys-

* Mark x, 23. † Ibid x, 27.

teries which the multitude adore. Christ has redeemed all, blessed all, conquered all, and His generous arms embrace the universe. Whoever escapes from them perishes through his own fault; and, after what we have just said, it is at least doubtful that the greater number are involved in this sad lot. Children who died in the faith of their fathers or in the faith of the Church by baptism, according to the times of their birth, form in themselves an innumerable army of elect; the poor add to it their multitudes, whether they bear their burthen in the simplicity of a faith wholly Catholic, or, dispersed amongst the nations corrupted by schism and heresy, they owe it to the good faith of invincible ignorance that they remain in the benefice of the truth; the maidens and the Christian mothers, and so many women disabused by the very violence of the passions, augment by their innocence or their repentance the pages of immortality; and finally, among the rest, such as we see them around us, early or late, and even in the very midst of death, God yet gathers the fruit of the blood which He accepted for us from the origin of the world. But if the number and the duration of the peoples amidst whom Christianity has never had or has not now the form of a public establishment, affright the hopes of our charity, we must consider two things: first, that many amongst these peoples have been saved by the providential ways indicated in our previous conference; and, second, that we know not the extent of the ages wherein God has circumscribed in His thought the action of Christianity, and also the measure of power and universality which the Church will attain in the future. The future, if need be, may be a compensation for the past. No one knows its

term, its nature, or its fruit. Unbelief can make of it a burial; faith can make of it a resurrection. But in any case, if God has reserved to Himself the secret of it, this secret is as likely to fall into the balance of good as into the balance of evil, and thus the question remains veiled to the profit of liberty. What is beyond all question is the bounty of God, the price which He has paid for our salvation, and the art with which He has disposed the members and the functions of the human family in order to open to a greater number the gates of eternity.

In concluding, I experience remorse. I fear that I have persuaded you that salvation is easy, and that I have betrayed that delicacy with which the Saviour has concealed from us the number of the elect. He has wished, evidently, neither to discourage nor to embolden us, and this prudence was present to Him as a means of saving us. Have I imitated Him, as a disciple ought to imitate his Master? Have I remained faithful to the limits set by His hand in the Gospel? Some will doubt this, perhaps; but, after all, what have I done but bring before you the discussions of a recognized theology, and how can you conclude from my discourse that you ought not to take any care of your salvation? Did but the tenth part of mankind fall a prey to hell, would it not be sufficient to terrify you, and impel each of you, according to the words of St Paul, "to work out his salvation with fear and trembling"?* You who have faith, you will remain in this salutary apprehension; you who have it not, you will know that it is not so easy

* Phil. ii, 12.

to oppose to God in the ways of His Providence, certitudes which He has refused to the human mind.—*Ibid.*

XCII

Eternal Punishment

It is a very extraordinary thing that at no epoch of Christian times has the doctrine of the eternal punishments of another life engendered those strong repulsions which have rent the Church so frequently. Every dogma has been attacked save that; every important point of revealed theology has given occasion to discussions, divisions, and decisions; one alone, the most terrible of all, has escaped this common law, and the eternity of the impious has come down to us, without having met on that long way with a mind who contested its justice, or at least who overturned its formidable certitude in the minds of any considerable section of his age. Origen tried it, it is said, and was tardily accused of it; but neither the empire of his genius nor the greatness of his memory could form behind him a concurrence capable of becoming a schism or a heresy. The care which Justinian took to have him condemned was a superfluous care, an imperial caprice which remained without honour in the Church, and the very article of this condemnation has disappeared from the text of the councils, if it was ever inserted there.

Protestants, who have denied so many things, have not denied this. Destroyers of what offered most umbrage to human sense, they have not despoiled hell of its unchanging features; they have stayed their hand at that abode of woe,

that hand which has not respected the door of the tabernacle, wherein reposes, amid sacrifice and bounty, the flesh of the Man-God. If their intelligence has since dared even such a negation, they have not done so as Protestants, that is to say, as men who preserve some remnants of faith, but as slaves of Rationalism, who have gathered together their ruins as they increased them. Their testimony is not that of heresy, but of incredulity. As to those who have escaped this depth of degradation and preserved some vestige of faith, they proclaim, with all Catholics, the truth underlying those words of the Son of God: "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire." *

The pagans themselves, with an exception which confirms the general belief, believed in the eternity of divine punishment in the future world, and Virgil was the interpreter of the common belief in that famous verse:

"Sedet Theseus æternumque sedebit."

Whence comes this accord? How is it that a dogma which repels the hearts of our feeble generation has traversed so many ages without encountering doubt, and even without appearing to excite the sentiment of a pious sadness? While reading antiquity, when it speaks of hell, one would, on the contrary, believe that there is discernible a certain strain of joy which exults in the success of the divine justice, and finds in it a consolation amid the present evils of humanity. Whence is this? Who can explain this singular phenomenon? It is because the dogma of the eternity of suffering is invincibly bound up with the notion, invincible

* Matt. xxv, 41.

also, of the difference between good and evil, and that whoever feels this difference effectively and profoundly, feels at the same time the necessity for an irremediable separation between the souls who have been to the end the instruments of evil and those who have been to the end the incorruptible organs of good. In fact, all things are between two terms—the beginning and the end; and these two terms are of their nature absolutely and necessarily eternal. The beginning is so, for if it were not, it would have a source anterior to it, and consequently it would not be the beginning. The end is so also; for if it were not, it would have a succession, and consequently it would not be the end. Everything, then, is inevitably fixed between these two pillars of Hercules, the eternity that commences and the eternity that ends, with the exception of God, who, having no beginning, has no conclusion, and subsists indivisibly in His own, sole eternity. But all else besides Him, that is to say, every creature, every act, every state, every number has a point which is the first, and another point which is the last, a scene which opens the drama, and another scene that concludes it. If the beginning failed, the thing would not be; if the conclusion never came, the thing would be eternally on the way, that is, it would have no end. But a thing without end is metaphysically impossible, because it would be unreasonable. Everything ends then, and the end of all, like the beginning of all, is eternity.

Whence it follows that there needs be for the moral order, as well as for all the rest, a conclusion, a conclusion which is of necessity eternal; and that thus, to escape the dogma of the eternity of punishment, a proposition must be

accepted against which the popular sense, as well as the metaphysical sense, revolts, that is to say, that the conclusion of good is identical with the conclusion of evil; or, in other words, that the just and the wicked arrive inevitably at the same eternity. But to affirm this is to deny the distinction between good and evil. For it is manifest that if definite good results from evil as naturally as it results from good, the effect being the same, the cause is the same also, unless the human mind reverse the fundamental axiom that the effect is proportioned to the cause and the conclusion to the beginning.

This reasoning has impressed all generations; and perhaps the surest proof that the conception of good and evil has diminished in our age is the pain caused it by a dogma without which the moral order is no more than a phantom, and almost a jest. Nevertheless, despite this enfeeblement of the interior sense, the difficulty is apparent to the intelligence even in our time, and Jean Jacques Rousseau confessed that "the wicked are a great perplexity for this world and the next." Moreover, efforts have been made to elude the evidence that connects the eternity of chastisement with the distinction between good and evil.

It has been said: Why should not the sinful man, who has died without making reparation to God, why should he not obtain his pardon after expiatory sufferings proportioned to the crimes of his life? Is it the same thing to attain to beatitude without passing through suffering, as to attain to it through tears and groans? Is it not a confusion of language to call by the same name lots so different, and to affirm that the conclusion of good would be identical with

the conclusion of evil, because, finally, every creature would repose in God? If it be necessary that God should punish a soul for a thousand years, He will keep it from His bosom for a thousand years; and when the gates of eternal felicity will finally open before it, who will reproach justice with not being satisfied, and with having welcomed without distinction the just man and the sinner?

The way does not change the term, and time, however long it may be, takes nothing from eternity. Eternity alone is a conclusion, and, by whatever road it is reached, it imparts to a being, the moment it absorbs it, the indivisible gift of itself, a gift that includes all duration with all repose, and which, without producing in each of the elect, on account of the diversity of merits, an equal sensation, imparts to all a perfect and unspeakable felicity. If the wicked man has an equal right to it with the just, vainly will you speak to him of the sombre ways which will conduct him to it; he will know that eternal beatitude is his, that God Himself has not the power to deprive him of it, and, better logician than your menaces, he will laugh at the terrors with which, through metaphysical respect for the difference between good and evil, you seek to inspire him. The conclusion is assured to him, a conclusion which a thousand ages will not shorten by one day; what matters the rest to him? To attach any importance to it, he must discover an essential difference between an eternity of happiness, preceded by transient sufferings, and an eternity of happiness pure and simple; but this difference is but an accident, and the infinite force of the conclusion rejects as inane all that is not itself.

Moreover, the argument takes for granted that a limited time of suffering is enough to expiate in the next life the sins of this. It is an error destructive in itself of the idea of good and evil. Pain alone expiates nothing, because it effects no change in the heart; what expiates is pain accepted by repentance. But repentance is a disposition of the soul which requires the concurrence of two things—grace and liberty; and neither one nor the other appertains any longer to the intelligence removed by death from the condition of trial. Death places the sinner in presence of a truth which no longer leaves him any choice; he sees, he knows, he is certain with a certainty which overwhelms his free-will; and nevertheless, he does not turn to God to implore mercy, because grace is refused him; and grace is refused him because it would be already pardon, that pardon which he disdained when he could obtain it, and which he does not even desire in the abyss into which he has fallen. For death, which has separated him from the world, has not separated him from his own heart; pride and hate survive there, intensified and nourished by his misfortune, and, an eternal blasphemer, he reproaches God with all he sees, all he knows, all he feels. God should then come to him despite of him, and on a given day, such an age sounding such an hour, this soul would pass from misery without repentance—what do I say?—from hatred and from blasphemy, to the close embrace of divine love. And that would be justice! And that would be the last word of commerce between God and man! And that would be known beforehand, in order to found truth, justice, and religion here below! God, the thrice-holy God, would be the inalienable patrimony of every sin-

ner arrived at a certain age of ingratitude and revolt, and the heavens would be opened for Nero as for St Louis, with this difference, that Nero would enter there later, to the end that he may have time to crown the impenitence of his life by the impenitence of his expiation! . . .

But it is not enough to have established the inviolable dogma of the eternity of suffering. I feel by the palpitations of your intelligence that difficulties remain; I know them, and I wish to remove them.

You say to yourself: What have we just heard? Metaphysical reasonings. It has been shown to us that all things are enclosed between a beginning and a conclusion, the one and the other eternal, and that, the moral order being subject to this law, it is necessary that an eternity should be at the end of a sinful life, an eternity infallibly miserable, unless there be assigned to evil the same conclusion as to good, which would imply, in opposition to the universal conscience, the identity of both. Well and good; but what are metaphysics against the evidence of the moral sense? What are metaphysics, even the most irreproachable, against the interior voice of justice, which tells us that the punishment is necessarily proportioned to the sin? And what sin could man commit in his heart, feeble as it is narrow, which merits a punishment measured by eternity? Eternity, in whatever way we understand it, and above all as it relates to a finite being, is an abyss wherein the least pain assumes the immense character which we call infinite, and bears thenceforth no proportion to the sin which it is intended to punish. Will you affirm that the sin is infinite? Conscience revolts against such an affirmation.

Will you deny that the punishment is so? Conscience will refuse you its assent. Will you say that an infinite sin merits infinite suffering? Conscience will raise its voice still higher against you. It holds you shut in between these alternatives, and leaves you no way of escape from the evidence of your error.

In the first place, I will reject the thought that God condemns the sinner eternally for a single sin into which he may have fallen by chance before dying, as if Providence was on the look-out in some way for the moment of our lapse to make it the supreme moment of our death and of our reprobation. It is, indeed, of faith that one grave sin alone, committed knowingly and wilfully against the express will of God, separates man from communion with God, and exposes him, if he die in that state, to the lot of the reprobate. But it is not of faith, far from it, that God pursues the observers of His commandments with a restless and sombre vigilance, watching only for the hour of a passing fall to precipitate them into the abyss of death and despair. The Scriptures are full of the patience of God, even with regard to the greatest sinners, and there is not one of us who has not had during his life a proof of this merciful longanimity. "The Lord," says St Peter, "delayeth not His promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance."* It is true that in other passages the Gospel tells us to watch, and that "the day of the Lord shall so come, as a thief in the night";† but these passages refer to the end of the world, and even although they

* 2 Pet. iii, 9. † 1 Thess. v, 2.

were applicable to the death of each one of us, it would not follow that Providence seeks to take us unawares after a single sin, that it may have pleasure in our perdition. We must watch, because "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak;"* but we must also believe in the word which said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."† Every man who will perish, will perish despite the efforts of God; he will perish convicted of ingratitude, rejected not by chance, but through the obstinacy of his own ill-will.

There remains the question of the proportion between the penalty and the sin. I grant that this proportion is necessary; it is natural justice, and faith, as well as reason, commands us to believe it. The Scripture says to us that "God will render to every one according to his works,"‡ and the Church has not ceased to announce to the nations the equity of the judgments of God. Therefore it is that eternity, although uniform in its metaphysical duration, is not so in the effect which it produces upon the consciences, the souls, and the bodies of the damned. Each one of them receives the avenging stroke according as he merits it, and this distinction in their lot subsists eternally, as well as the nature of their sins and the moral condition of their hearts. The continuance of the suffering changes not the degree of it, and, above all, imparts not to it the character of infinity; this character appertains only to eternity in relation to God, because in God eternity is the indivisible duration of a Being substantially one and present to Himself in an immutable moment, which has neither past, nor

* Mark xiv, 38. † Luke ii, 14. ‡ Matt. xvi, 27.

present, nor future, nor commencement, nor end. Apart from God, eternity is no more than the persistence of a finite being, a river whose course is divided into an indeterminate multitude of points, whereof each has but the extent and the weight of the finite, and imparts to the lost only a fixed sensation, ever equal to itself, and which applies to their chastisement the measure willed by God. What deceives us in this is that we attribute to the persevering duration of the other life the same laws and the same effects as to the persevering duration of our mortal life. Here below, time reigns over us, time which is progressive, and of which the blows increase in energy by repetition; beyond this world, time is no more, because there all is closed and ended. A new era places everything under the empire of pure stability; this era is the real eternity for the spirits who live in God; it is an imperfect eternity for the beings who live apart from God; that is to say, a dead and unprogressive duration, whence results a kind of sensation which to us is completely inappreciable and unknown. If we breathed for a quarter of an hour outside all movement, we would have some idea of it; but this is impossible for us, motion presses us on all sides, it is within us and without us, and with it a life which makes it impossible for us to comprehend a suffering which is stable and always proportioned to the sin which it punishes without expiating it. Imagination fails here to obey our reason; but reason remains, and we must consult it in order to form a judgment of the justice of God.

Never will I believe that God is not powerful enough to impress the sinner with the sensation he merits, and to make of duration an equitable

instrument of His decrees. Duration obeys God like everything else, and, conducted by His hand, it strikes in the measure in which it ought to strike. That is sufficient for me. I do not say that the pains of hell are not formidable; for I have heard that word: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* I mean to say that the perseverance of their duration destroys not their proportion to the crimes which they are to punish, a proportion which is a necessity of the justice of God, and a dogma of faith as well as an evidence of reason.

The question of justice being disposed of, the unbeliever turns to the goodness of God. God is good, he says; it is His primary attribute, it is that which, as it were, permeates the others, and the Scripture itself says: "The Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works—Suavis Dominus universis, et miserationes ejus super omnia opera ejus."† A thought which Milton has rendered admirably in his "Paradise Lost," when, after having traced the whole order of the redemption, he represents God as saying:

> In mercy and justice both,
> Through heaven and earth, so shall my glory excel;
> But mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine.

But how will it shine the last if there be no pardon for sinners, if, after ages have passed over their chastisement, God remains insensible to that terrible misfortune, and regard with an indifferent eye the continuation of their eternity? How will He bear testimony to Himself that He is good, and that "His mercy is over all His works"? Man, feeble as he is in goodness, is

* Heb. x, 31. † Ps. cxliv. 9.

not capable of an eternal vengeance; how can God bear the spectacle and the burden of it?

It is true man is not capable of punishing eternally, first because he comprehends not eternity, and then because all his virtues are short as his life and narrow as his heart. You invoke goodness: do you know what it is? Do you know that it is goodness which puts the seal on the reprobation of sinners? I astonish you, doubtless; but hear me, and learn finally how futile are the hopes and the reasonings of man against the judgments of God.

You join in your mind the idea of goodness with the idea of a pardon always possible and always accorded, notwithstanding the perseverance of the sinner in evil; you thus constitute it an irreconcilable adversary of justice, and you break in God the necessary unity of His perfections. I do not pause to say to you that that is a sacrilegious thought, which destroys in the intelligence the metaphysical and moral notion of God; my design is to go to the very bottom of things, and to show you, in defining goodness, how it accords with justice in assuring the eternal reprobation of sinners, once that they have lost with the time of trial, the time of reconciliation. What, then, is goodness? Goodness is gratuitous love. He is good who loves without cause, who loves the first, who loves with ardour, who loves even to death; and such is the love of God. God owed us nothing, because we were not; He discovered in us no reason for loving us, because we had nothing before He gave us something; His love for us, as for every creature, was therefore a gratuitous love, an act of infinite goodness. But attend well, I pray you; love, good as it is—

I would dare to say, blindly good as it is—has at all times a need which is in its essence, and from which it cannot free itself; this need of love—be astonished as much as you please—this need of love is to be loved. Love pardons everything save one thing only, which is, not to be loved. I would wish it were otherwise, if such be your desire, but I would believe myself to be mad did I not pardon love this need which it has of being loved. And if it be not loved, what will it do? What will it do! I am about to tell you, in stealing from yourself, from the bottom of your heart, the secret of love.

I am much deceived, or you have loved, were it but once. I do not now distinguish legitimate affections from those which are not so; I take them all, provided they are sincere, in their inmost reality. You have then loved, and I suppose that even to-day your soul is under the empire of that generous and terrible passion. It has chosen, it has given itself, it has devoted itself wholly; but, oh sorrow! this gift which you have made of yourself is rejected. What will be your resource? Your resource will be not to grow weary, to hope against hope, to believe in the efficacy of a sentiment so true, so strong as yours. Bend the knee, if you must; humble your pride; leave nothing undone to persuade ingratitude and to move insensibility. But in the end if you do not succeed, what will you do? I will give you an advice which I have from a great moralist; Labruyère said: "When you have done much and done much in vain, in order to be loved, there is still one resource, it is to do nothing more." Your earnestness has been repelled; try abandonment. I do not mean a sincere, definitive abandonment, but an abandon-

ment of trial, from which tenderness may contrive a return. After that, the last effort of your soul having failed, this is what will come to pass in you; you will say to yourself: Come away, be a man, abuse no longer that faculty of loving which has been given you from on high, return to reason, take up your soul and depart. Such is the history of the human heart in love, and such is also that of God. For, in heaven and on earth, love has but one name, one essence, one law, one effect.

God anticipated you with affection from all eternity. You were nothing for Him, nothing for the universe, nothing for yourself: He chose you before you had a being. This body whose grace you profane, He it was who gave it to you as an antique vase all pure from the hand of the sculptor; He opened your eyes that you might see Him in the world before seeing Him in His substance; He formed your ears that you might hear His voice, and designed your lips that you might respond to Him. Within this *chef-d'œuvre* of His loving hands, He placed a living light which shines of itself, and whose rays have an affinity with His own light, that each may seek the other, to be united one day in the ecstasy of the same flame and the same eternity. But you, ungrateful son of so gratuitous a devotion, you fled from the love which asked of you but love. You appropriated to yourself the adoration which you owed to God; you closed your eyes that you might not see Him, your ears that you might not respond to Him, and, lost in the debauch of a base egotism, you preferred to live far away from Him, defiled and unhappy, rather than to await, in a peace without reproach, the hour of His final revelation. God was aggrieved: He feared

that He did too little for you, and descending from the obscurity which enveloped Him, He placed before you His person, His voice, His acts, His life, and, lest this should still be not enough, He died before your eyes, crucified by your hands. Having done this for all, He arms Himself against each one; He pursues humanity, soul by soul, day by day, and it is only when vanquished and despised to the last hour that at length He takes up His love and departs for ever. For love—it is its law—crosses not again to the same shores, and once it has quitted them, it returns there no more.

Dante placed over the gate of hell this famous inscription:

> Through me you pass into the city of woe:
> Through me you pass into eternal pain:
> Through me among the people lost for aye.
> . . . . . .
> All hope abandon ye who enter here.

But why abandon hope? Why, in a place where the divine goodness ought to be found, since it is inseparable from God, must every hopeful prospect be abandoned, far off though it may be? The poet explains it to us in a verse which I never recall without a thrill of admiration:

> Eternal justice has made me, and primeval love.

If it were justice alone which had prepared the abyss, there would have been a remedy; but it was love also, *primeval love:* this it is which takes away all hope. When we are condemned by justice, we may have recourse to love; but when we are condemned by love, to whom shall we have recourse? Such is the lot of the damned.

Love which has given its blood for them, this very love it is which curses them. What! a God has come here below for you; He has taken upon Him your nature, spoken your language, touched your hand, healed your wounds, raised your dead: what do I say? A God has delivered Himself for you to the bonds and to the insults of treason; He has permitted Himself to be exposed naked in a public place amid prostitutes and robbers, to be tied to a post, to be torn with rods, to be crowned with thorns. Lastly, He has died for you upon a cross! And, after that, do you think that you will be permitted to blaspheme and to laugh, and to go without fear to the nuptials of your pleasures? Oh, no, undeceive yourself; love is not play. We are not loved by God with impunity; we are not loved even to the gibbet with impunity. It is not justice which is without mercy; it is love. We have tried love too far, it is life or death, and when there is question of the love of a God, it is eternal life or eternal death.—*72nd Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XCIII

A Retrospect

(1851)

TWENTY-SEVEN years ago, when God restored to me the light which I had lost through my own fault, He also inspired me with the thought of consecrating myself to His service in the sacred ministry; and thenceforth I had nothing more present to my mind than the conviction that many men remain estranged from Christianity

because they do not know it, and that they do not know it because nobody teaches it to them. I called to mind the days of my adolescence, the little concerning God that had been communicated to me from the time when I went forth from the domestic roof, and I was astonished that, in the midst of a Christian nation, souls might attain the confines of virility without having known religion, except through three months' instruction received when they were approaching twelve years of age. I resolved, if God spared my life, and gave me intelligence and strength, to do my part in supplying this strange educational want in the midst of a civilized people.

Ten years after I had thus, presumptuously perhaps, communed with myself in the privacy of my conscience, I was called to this pulpit of Notre-Dame by the late Monseigneur de Quélen, Archbishop of Paris, the first, the most faithful, and the most kind protector of my youth. Separated from me by many convictions, surrounded by men who loved me not, he took me under the guardianship of an affection as generous as it was paternal, and, despite my faults and my enemies, he never withdrew from above my inexperienced head the hand which he had placed upon it when imparting to it the unction of the priesthood and the kiss of peace from his pontifical heart. Now that he is no more, and that after seventeen years this work of the Conferences of Notre-Dame, of which he was the author, has crowned his life and his tomb, I cannot review the past without bowing down my memory before his, and rendering to it, in this public act of reverence, the homage of piety which a son owes to his father.

I was thirty-three years of age when the honour was imposed upon me of teaching you the faith, and of teaching it to you in a way conformable to the condition of your minds, to the instincts of our age, and the dignity of the pulpit whence this teaching was to be imparted to you. Was I sufficiently prepared for this duty, or was I not? I know not—God knows. When I pass over in my mind the years which preceded these days of Notre-Dame, the faith of my childhood, the negations of my youth, the sudden and unlooked-for change which snatched me, without transition, from the laxities of civil life, and placed me within the shades of sacerdotal initiation, then, after a long period of studious obscurity, the whirl of events which brought me suddenly face to face with public opinion, it seems to me sometimes that the hand of the Lord was guiding me, and that, in appearing before you, I obeyed His predestination.

However it may have been then, however it may be to-day, I must needs have the imprudence which youth confers, sustained by the security which a recognized vocation inspires; I had the imprudence of my inexperience, but I heard the call of God in the voice of my bishop. All Christianity presented itself to me as to a man who was to be its architect for a generation. If I consulted my predecessors, to learn of them the art of expounding such great things, I found them placing God at the commencement and as the vanguard of their work, under the protection of profound metaphysics; thence descending to the Jewish people, in the abysses of history, and finally arriving at Christ and the Church founded by Him. I did not find fault with this order, but I did not accept it. It

seemed to me that we need not set out either from metaphysics or from history, but may take our stand upon the solid soil of living reality, and seek there the traces of God. For God, I said to myself, cannot at any time be absent from humanity. He has been with it, He is with it, and He will ever be with it in a visible work, proportioned to the needs of the time, and which should reveal Him to all eyes. Here it is we must find Him to point Him out to those who see Him not, and then go back from age to age to the sources of His action, enlightening and fortifying each part with the light and unity of all.

But the Catholic Church is now the great revealing marvel of God. She it is who fills the world's scene with a miracle which has now endured for eighteen centuries: we may not regard her, or listen to her, or comprehend her, but she is there. She is there; and he who sees her not, or who regards her as an ordinary thing, is wholly incapable of yielding to reason or learning from the past. It is then with the Church that we must open the demonstration of Christianity, because she is the summit of it, and we see her first, as on the banks of the Nile we see from afar the solitary and illuminated head of the pyramids.—*73rd and last Conference of Notre-Dame.*

XCIV

The Throne of France

ASSUREDLY the house of France is the greatest house in the world. It reckons eight to nine centuries of royal bloom; and when we dig deep

to discover its first traces, mayhap we shall discover some remains of the blood of Charlemagne, that man who was, after Christ, the father of modern times, and whose name has remained magnificent amid all names. Add to the greatness of antiquity and of origin that of the people governed by that race, reigns famous, some for their victories, others for their sanctity, others for their learning, all for being bound up with the course of events which, during a thousand years, have constituted the destiny of the world; and you will believe without difficulty that no royal house can dispute with it the honour of rank. I speak of it without flattery, now that the lightning has fallen upon that ancient stock, and has left to it in exile the green wound of misfortune.—*Ibid.*

XCV

Close of the Conferences of Notre-Dame

I EXPERIENCE within me two contrary sentiments: one of joy, at having accomplished with you a work useful for the salvation of many, and accomplished it in an age which has been called the age of failures; the other of sadness, remembering that such a work is not finished by a man without leaving in it the best part of himself, the first-fruits of his strength and the flower of his years. Dante commences thus his divine epopee:

> "In the midway of this our mortal life,
> I found me in a gloomy wood."

I have arrived at the midway of life,* where man lays aside the last ray of his youth, and descends

* He was 50.

by a steep incline to the shores of impotence and forgetfulness. I ask no better than to descend, since it is the lot which an equitable Providence has appointed for us; but at this point of separation, whence I can still see the times which are about to end, you will not envy me the consolation of glancing back at them, and of evoking before you, who were the companions of my journey, some of the recollections which render so dear to me this metropolis and you.

Here it was, when my soul was re-opened to the light of God, that pardon descended upon my sins; and here I see the altar where, upon my lips, fortified by age and purified by repentance, I received for the second time the God who had visited me at the dawn of my youth. Here, prostrate upon the pavement of the temple, I was raised by degrees to the unction of the priesthood; and here, after long wanderings, wherein I sought the secret of my predestination, it was revealed to me in this pulpit, which, during seventeen years, you have encompassed with silence and with honour. Hither it was that, on my return from a voluntary exile, I brought back the religious habit which a half century of proscription had banished from Paris, and which, when presented to an assembly formidable in the number and diversity of the persons who composed it, obtained the triumph of unanimous respect. Hither it was that on the morrow of a revolution, when our public ways were still covered with the fragments of the throne and with the evidences of war, you came to hear from my mouth the word which survives all ruins, and which, on that same day, evoking an emotion which none suppressed, was saluted with your applause. Here, beneath the flag-stones near the altar, repose my two first

archbishops; he who called me, yet young, to the honour of teaching you, and he who recalled me to it, after a distrust of my own ability had separated me from you. Here it is, upon this same archiepiscopal throne, that I have found again, in a third pontiff, the same heart and the same protection. In fine, here have had birth all the affections which have consoled my life, and here, a solitary man, unknown to the great, belonging to no party, a stranger to those places where the crowd presses and relations are formed, I have met with souls who have loved me.

O walls of Notre-Dame, sacred vaults which have borne my words to so many intelligences deprived of God, altars which have blessed me, I do not separate myself from you; I but proclaim what you have been to one man, and exult within myself at the recollection of your benefits, as the children of Israel, at home or in exile, celebrated the memory of Sion. And you, generation already numerous, in whom, mayhap, I have sown truths and virtues, I remain united with you in the future as I have been in the past; but if a time should arrive when my strength will be unequal to my enthusiasm, and you come to disdain the remains of a voice which was dear to you, know that you will never be ungrateful, for nothing can henceforth deprive me of you as the glory of my life in the past and my crown in eternity.—*Ibid.*

XCVI

No Man is secure until his Death

In 1852, being the year after the close of the Conferences of Notre-Dame, Lacordaire's friend, Henri Villard, of the French bar, asked his permission to prepare his biography in a more complete form than had up to that been attempted. The reply was, as Villard says, "one of the most admirable letters which had ever come forth from his heart."

I know not, my dear friend, whether I shall merit that anyone will take the trouble to write my life after my death. Death alone it is which imparts to life its true character and warrants its perpetuation. Up to that a man is of little importance; he may at any moment fall into disgrace before men and before God. We think him worthy of praise and admiration to-day: to-morrow we will forget him or despise him. While I live friendship will blind you; you will not see me as I am in reality, you will make me too great or too little, and in exposing me to the weakness of self-love, you will expose me also to the hatred which pride excites. Alas! what am I before God? What have I accomplished? Will anything I have done be permanent? The work of the re-establishment in France of the Order of Friars-Preachers—will it be an ephemeral gleam or a solid foundation? Who can say? The Conferences of Notre-Dame, of which the thoughts and the form seem to appeal to our contemporaries, will they survive the age in which they have appeared? And then what possible falls! I have seen men fall who were placed

higher than I; their number is great in history, greater still in our unstable time.

Yet, if it be for you a pious care to gather the materials of my poor life, gather them as for yourself alone,* for your more mature years, and if I die before you, as will be in the order of nature, you will see then if it be for the edification of souls to say something of me over my grave. Death will give you a free hand because it will give you the measure of all. You will be older, and I will be regarded from a better point of view.

This, my dear friend, is what I feel. There were times, perhaps, when I would have yielded more to your wishes; but, as I advance towards the end, I desire to retire far from tumult, that I may accomplish better the good which God commits to me. I take pleasure in the thought that a time of profound solitude is reserved for me, and that God will deliver me before death from the too-absorbing eclat in which I have lived. To repose in forgotten glory is a great good. Let me attain to it quietly, and give me this proof of your friendship, obscure as such proof is, but with the merit of all that is unknown.

Villard published in 1870 his "Étude Biographique et Critique," with the unpublished correspondence of Lacordaire.

* "Comme on fait de choses intime, pour vous."

XCVII

The Passions

I PROPOSE to speak to you of beaten paths, of those passions of the multitude which sever them from God, and from age to age deliver them over to the seductive emotions of flesh and blood.

The first gift of God to the body of Adam, after He had formed it with His hands, was this: "I have given you," said He to him, "every herb bearing seed upon the earth, and all trees that have in themselves seed of their own kind, to be your meat." * Wondrous gift, which made all nature the table of man, and gave him blood from the veins of the universe, while establishing between him and every being, by this transformation of substance, a sublime relationship. But of these seeds and these fruits, so diverse in form, in odour, and in taste, there were two destined to be for us one day the active symbols of eternal life, and which contained in their privileged preparation a more remarkable power with a more perfect flavour than the rest. These were bread and wine, the ancient offering which the first of the pontiffs presented in homage to the first of the patriarchs under the old law. Bread, that substance generous, but calm; wine, that substance more generous still, which, according to the very expression of the Scripture, received from the Creator the mission of cheering the heart of man.† Man indeed, when he raised

* Gen. i, 29. † Ps. ciii, 15.

the beneficent cup to his lips, perceived that there was a mysterious affinity between the beverage and his soul, and that melancholy, the veil of sadness with which sin has covered our interior, disappeared by degrees under the reparative influence of the great liquor. It was as a revelation of that invisible nutriment on which the saints in heaven live, and which rejoices the immortality of their youth in that of God. But the more precious the gifts, the more is virtue necessary for the proper use of them. We used this one badly. Carrying to an extreme the experience of its energy, we were not content with the expansion of our heart and the dissipation of its gloom; reason, that importunate guest which frightens us with truth, conscience, that other witness which conjures up before us the sad image of ourselves—the one and the other disappeared before the unforeseen charm of the poison: we felt the ecstasy of intoxication.

It is not alone the savage, on the banks of the frozen lakes at the pole, who receives with avidity, in exchange for his natural treasures, the substance which he calls *fire water*. The civilized man himself disdains not to sacrifice his intelligence to the degrading obliviousness of his miseries. We see the poor, the poor of great nations, rush no longer for *bread and shows*, as in the time of the Roman empire, but to the ignoble door at which lucre sells to them, at the price of their sweat, an instant of shameful fascination. So must man forget himself, so cumbrous is reason within him, when God sustains not for him the tragic burden in his heart! But not the poor alone dishonour the civilized nations by seeking emotion and peace in the voluntary brutality of intoxication; the rich, surrounded as

they are by the luxury of the arts, succumb to this abject desire, and the devouring remorse of their inanity impels them, like the people, towards the same compensations of life. What do I say? The liberal culture of thought by science and letters is not always a protection to the heart against so profound a degradation. Light, when it is not of God, has a vengeful bitterness, and the intelligence so suffers that it seeks refuge in the ecstatic loss of reason.

External to every created substance, in the ideal region of the abstract, lies a power, frigid, impassible, inexorable, which is to things of the material order what the destiny of antiquity was to things of the moral order: it is the mathematical law, the law of number, of extent, of force, which presides over the arrangement of the inanimate world, and sustains by its immutable sanction that which has neither sentiment, nor will, nor liberty, nor life. Who would have thought that even there, in the frozen region of calculation, man would find, to appease his thirst for happiness, another element of joy and ecstasy? He has found it nevertheless. He has discovered, amid those well-settled rules of number and motion, combinations which engender chances without engendering certitudes, and chance has appeared to him as the sovereign god of a felicity; for chance responded to one of his most pressing desires, the dramatic desire of his nature. This same man, who loves repose and seeks it in intoxication, wishes also, because he lives and is free, to create for himself an action, an action which will interest him deeply, will hold him in suspense by a complication independent of his will, and finally elevate or crush him by a sudden catastrophe. No other

drama so affects him. If he assists at the scenes of Sophocles or Corneille, it is not he who is the victim or the hero; he weeps over distant misfortunes which art conjures up to move him; but here it is himself, when he wills, as he wills, in the measure that pleases him. Chance and cupidity together make gambling a personal drama for him, a drama terrible and joyous, wherein hope, fear, joy, and sadness succeed one another, or rather, are confounded together at the same moment, and keep him gasping in a fever which becomes a frensy; for while we say the passion for wine, we say the frensy of gambling; a frensy as popular as the passion. But whilst the progress of taste among civilized nations has introduced among certain classes a sobriety which is considered a requisite of honour, gambling, stronger than civilization, survives the reforming movement of the age, and seems, among the rich especially, to be an inalienable appanage of humanity. It extends from the region of pleasure to that of public affairs; political events afford it its good or bad chances; and victory or defeat, while deciding the lot of empires upon the field of battle, decides also the downfall of a family or its elevation.

But is this all? Has nature said to us her last word at this banquet of our passions, which she has so ingeniously prepared for us? Is she content with her power over us, or is there in the abyss of her secrets a temptation of felicity which she still reserves for us?

Here I am terrified at what I must say, and my thought, restrained as it is in my breast, is agitated and trembles as it goes forth. I will say it nevertheless. I will say it under the eye of God, certain that it is my duty, and yours also,

which is to hear it with modesty and respect, will not fail to assist me.

It is not external to man, from earth to heaven; it is not in the substances capable of disturbing the reason or in the tragedies of chance that is found the most seductive sensation of man, his primary joy and his most poignant ecstasy. Not beyond him or around him, but in himself, in the living circle of his personality, he finds a palpable flesh, a living and sensible flesh, which cleaves to his soul, which receives orders from it, but which acts upon it in its turn and offers to it a theatre where it can summon life from the very bosom of God. For God has not given us life for ourselves alone, as a miser's treasure, incapable of being communicated. Life is, by its nature, fruitful; it comes of an inexhaustible source, and springs up of itself in generations without end. He, then, who has given it to us, the God who has said to all that is: *Live and multiply*, has, with still more reason, given to His chosen creature the command to live outside himself by transmitting himself to a posterity. But this commandment, divine for all, was so, in a very different manner, for us. For, as to others, He addressed Himself only to the body, to an organization composed of parts which might divide and discover in their division a seed of themselves. In man, the foundation of life was the soul, the soul, one, indivisible, incapable of dividing for the purpose of imparting itself, and being, like its Author, under the necessity of existing in its entirety or of ceasing to exist. There must needs be for man, then, at this supreme degree of existence, a paternity like to that of God, and as God, in the inaccessible light of His essence, said to Himself, speaking to

another than Himself: *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee*, so man, who is primarily soul and secondarily body, must evoke, at one and the same time in the same act, a living soul and body of his image, and be also able to say to them like God: Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Heroic moment which man has corrupted with everything else, and in which, beneath the chaste veils of affection, he has found the secret of an intoxication without honour, without power, without life, but which goes beyond frensy; for if we say the frensy of gambling, we say the delirium of voluptuousness.

What has God not done to elevate this mystery to the height of its nature and its end! Sacred union of souls beneath the immortal yoke of love freely promised, pleasures and duties for ever in common, misfortunes borne together, joys of paternity tempered by the anxieties of the future, indescribable mingling of good and evil, virtue ever present to sustain the feebleness of the heart against the chafings and trials of life: but man is wiser in his corruption than Providence in its modesty. He has broken these bonds, rejected these obligations, and from the very sources of life has caused death to issue forth with voluptuousness, that immense and shoreless sea of the most accessible and most widespread of the passions! For, in the indulgence of other passions, man suffices not for himself; he needs money to procure the ecstasy of intoxication, he needs it also to secure excitement and oblivion in the drama of gaming; and the satisfactions of pride demand still more of it. But here man needs but himself; he is at once the theatre, the object, and the instrument of his passion, and, as the final word of truth in the prophecy of St John

is this: "He that thirsteth, let him come; and he that will, let him take the water of life freely,"* the final word of fallen nature, while opening to humanity the abyss of depravity, is this: Come, and drink gratuitously. Ah! thought fails me, and giddiness seizes me on this height to which vice has led me, and whence I contemplate, in its history of yesterday and its reign of to-day, the shipwreck of souls. I, like you, a son of liberty and of passion, with one foot upon this abyss which has been mine, and which may be so soon again, if divine grace abandon me, I feel dazed and I tremble, my sight is clouded, and my hand seeks on the ground the stone with which St Jerome struck his breast when that great man, in the depths of the desert, unassured by toil and solitude against the memories of his youth, believed that he saw the beauties of pagan Rome pass and repass before his white hairs, to solicit them again and dishonour them.—*2nd Conference of Toulouse, 1854.*

XCVIII

The Sources of Human Misery

WHO is this young man? Whence comes it that his eyes are dull, his checks colourless and sunken, his expression sad, his bearing downcast? Youth is the spring-time of beauty; God, who is ever young because He is ever beautiful, has willed to impart to us in our early years something of the aspect of His eternity. A young man's face is a reflection of the face of God, and it is impossible to see a virgin soul in a pure countenance without being moved by a sympathy

* Apoc. xxii, 17.

which is at once tenderness and respect. But this gift so great, this gift which precedes merit but not innocence, God takes away from him who abuses it by precocious passions, which I wish not even to name. Vice imprints itself upon this beautiful flesh which moved the heart; it traces there shameful lines, premature and accusing furrows, an indescribable decrepitude which is not the sign of years, nor of the meditations of a man devoted to austere duties, but the certain index of a depravity which has left ruin in its path. The wrinkles increase with shame, and we see appear amongst us those spectres, in unveiled deformity, as if the last judgment had already come and presented them naked to the contempt of earth and heaven.

Thus it is with all our passions; each has its earthly and revealing chastisement, designed to teach us that their way is false, and that happiness is not the term of the joys which they bring to us. If voluptuousness brings death to youth and life, gambling brings ruin with terrible anguish upon the possessors of the most stable fortunes, and drunkenness, by the shocks it imparts to reason, degrades the intelligence, of which reason is the primary light, and reduces it to a state of stupidity, which the very brute-beast would despise. Pride, which we would think cold, nevertheless conceals storms beneath its frozen surface, like those polar seas where the winds are perhaps less powerful and active, but which, at certain times, dissolve their inert masses and seem to proclaim to the world the destruction of its foundations. Hatred and vengeance brood beneath discontented pride, and disappointed ambition has storms of anguish which crush to death the fallen man. These are

dark spectacles both within us and without. Our soul is their chief theatre; the world presents them to us in an aggravated form, and history, faithful to the ordinance of God, inscribes upon the ruins of Tyre and of Babylon the desolations of the past and the menaces of the future.

But the ordinary misfortunes of man and humanity are not enough to instruct us as to the end of the passions. God has prepared other warnings. In all things there is a *dénouement*. As life closes in death, as a drama concludes with a catastrophe which is the result of the complicated springs brought into play by the mind of the poet, so in the drama of the passions astray from God there must needs be a supreme act, something thrilling, unheard of, before which every malediction pales, even the sign of Cain, the first murderer, so that no reasonable creature may doubt that life and felicity are not there, but that there, on the contrary, is the road of ruins which are never repaired. Young men who listen to me this morning, and who this evening will hearken to your vices, you will not all be smitten by the thunderbolt. The ancients said that it seeks the lofty summits, as if the master of the thunder was jealous of their elevation, or that he desired, in smiting them, to give a lesson to pride: thus it is with all that is extraordinary. There is in misfortune, as in genius and virtue, a climax which every man does not reach, and few are the chosen victims of a great expiation. I do not know which of your number are to pay to the justice of God the ransom of the others; but when the night of Egypt shall have come, when the destroying angel shall pass, he will know more than I know

and he will not be deceived as to those who are already predestined for him. Before that night however, before that sword which approaches and which no one sees, you can still hearken to me, and reflect upon yourselves.

You have learned by experience that the joy which springs from the passions is not without its reaction. The intoxication having passed away, there remain in the soul a sad surprise, a bitter void. It may be filled up again with new gratifications, but only to return vaster than before; and this painful succession of extreme joys and profound dejection, flashes of happiness and the inability to be happy, engenders at length a state of continuous sadness. The mystery of sadness is the reverse of that of joy. Joy results from a dilatation and exaltation of the soul; sadness contracts and dejects the heart. Say not to the man who is stricken with it: See what a beautiful day! Say not to him: Listen to that sweet music! Say not even to him: I love you! Light, harmony, friendship, all that is charming and good, tend but to irritate his secret wound. He is devoted to the ghosts of the dead, and everything seems as in a tomb where the air fails him and the marble stifles him.

But this is only the beginning of expiation. As joy is not the term of the felicity which we have experienced, sadness is not the term of the unhappiness which we have tasted. Beyond joy here is ecstasy, beyond sadness there is despair. There comes a moment wherein all the satiated powers of man bring to him the invincible certitude of the nothingness of the universe. To the heart that is void this universe, so vast, the shadow of the infinite, becomes a void also.

Before, a smile was enough to open for the despairing man prospects without bounds; now, the worship of the earth would not move him. He would judge it as it is, nothing. For it is not conception which fails him: he is in the full clearness of his understanding. It is not even truth, for indeed the universe is nothing. What is wanting to him is to believe and to be moved. it is to see God in all things, and to find beneath the vestment which conceals Him from us the unction of his beauty. He finds it not. On the contrary, of the living and the dead who are bound together, it is he who is the corpse. He imparts his misery to the life which shackles him, and the palpitations of reality are no longer aught but the sound of a clock which is for him the measure of his agony. One might think, so frightful is this voluntary torment, that it has no existence; but, alas! despair, like ecstasy, has a name in every language, and every day in a well-known act, which is at once its proof and its effect, we have of it a too authentic testimony, if it is true that blood which is shed is the final seal of truth.

Despair has its martyrdom. When man no longer believes in this present world, and no vision of the future world sustains him, life becomes for him an insupportable burden. What is it to live when all is dead? What is it to live when truth no longer moves the intelligence, nor love the heart, when the senses themselves disdain voluptuousness, that last resource of hope and faith? With fixed but viewless gaze, the despairing man stands motionless. He hears yet no sound reaches him; no friend crosses his threshold, no hand clasps his. An infinite abandonment echoes the abandonment of himself

Then it is that the avenging angel lifts his sword; but he will not strike; he is commanded not to strike. The criminal must be the executioner, and must cut off a worthless life by a remorseless punishment.

Perhaps you think that this is the catastrophe which I announced to you as the supreme chastisement of the passions. You are mistaken. There is in despair a remnant of human greatness, because it includes a contempt for all created things, and consequently an indication of the incomparable capacity of our being. Suicide also, base as it is in the abdication of the duty of living, which includes every other duty, is nevertheless an act of liberty and of sovereignty over ourselves; examples of it have been witnessed, which have not seduced posterity but which have wrung from it something like a desire for pardon. God and man require a vengeance other than that, a vengeance whereof the shame shall be measureless, and the example without a rival. Death, however it may come, is but the separation of the soul from the body, the sorrowful vestibule of immortality; there is another death, a living death, which not only strikes the link of the two substances that compose our personal unity, but, falling upon the mind itself, discovers there also the possibility of ruin and finds a way to accomplish it. O power of evil and of nothingness! Unspeakable misfortune of the great work which God has accomplished in man! We have seen kings overthrown, glories perish, Homer led by a child, and Belisarius holding his helmet for an alms; but upon the brow of the blind poet and the discrowned kings there remained the ray divine. We might pity, but we still admired; it was

the sun setting on the horizon, but leaving behind him the dusk of evening, presage of the dawn of the morrow. Even in the fallen angel, tradition tells us that there survived something of his lost majesty, and that, beneath the wounds of the thunderbolt, the eye discerned the former nobility of the first-born of spirits. Why has God prepared for us a fall wherein remains nothing of the past? Is it that our pride has mounted higher than that of all creatures, and must we alone be buried, like Babel, in unhonoured dust?

Behold him then, this king of the world, the cedar of the lofty mountains; behold man as the passions have at last presented him to us. There was a light in his intelligence which showed him, above himself, truth, justice, goodness, the limitless expanse of being and its eternal duration: it was reason. Incomprehensible image of the divine reason, ours is the principle of all comprehension within us, the point at which we touch God, and leave finite spheres for the infinite. Reason is man in possession of himself and of God. How can it be destroyed? How can living man lose suddenly the consciousness of his spiritual and moral life, so as no longer to follow the trace of the thoughts that remain to him, like a hunter from whom escapes the prey which he still wishes to pursue? I know not. God alone knows where He strikes, He alone knows the spring which He breaks: as for us, spectators and victims, we see without comprehending, and we weep without being instructed. As the proud king who said to himself: "Is not this the great Babylon, which I have built, to be the seat of the kingdom, by the strength of my

power, and in the glory of my excellence?"* and who, stricken suddenly by God, was cast down from his throne, lower even than the domestic animals; even thus we see perish in the ignominy of insanity minds which but yesterday searched with their gaze the stars of heaven and the quicksands of thought. The thread of truth is now broken for them; memory still offers them its materials; they hear, they speak, they unite words one to another, but ideas do not follow this combination in their logical accord, like a palace of which the structure has been destroyed by a sudden catastrophe, and of which the stones, loosened and shifting, seek in vain the places which they filled before. What a spectacle of misery! The poor wretches have not the instincts of the brute, and they no longer have the superior light of man. They would rise if they could descend, but they cannot. The human form remains to them though terribly maimed in its comeliness, and the glimmer of intelligence which still haunts them adds a grim mockery to their fall.

I need not prove to you that this intellectual leprosy is caused by excesses of the passions. The physician has said so with sufficient distinctness to render it unnecessary to repeat it; and if sometimes an hereditary taint inflicts it upon some innocent soul, it is an aggravation of a primitive chastisement due to the general laws which operate on the transmission of life. The passions tend, by their nature, to enfeeble the reason, because they go contrary to its orders and its lights; nay, by their radical essence, when they are wholly corrupt, they extinguish that sacred light "which enlighteneth every man that

* Dan. iv, 27.

cometh into the world." Ought we to be astonished if at length, and in certain cases, they attain their unnatural end, and reason crumbles beneath their parricidal efforts? Insanity immediately precedes eternal damnation, not in the sense that every fallen intelligence is for ever lost, but in the sense that it is the most terrible and most perfect image of the soul separated from God. Hell will have greater torments; it will not perhaps have a more profound degradation.

It is by the number of the insane and of suicides that we may judge of the moral misery of a people. For, although this moral chastisement may be exceptional, it is, nevertheless, proportioned to the extent and the force of the passions which agitate the multitude. Pure morals, calm ambitions, sustain a people's organs of thought as well as those of life; the peaceful supremacy of virtue replaces amongst them the infatuation of pride and the excesses of voluptuousness; and if it cannot shield them from every evil, evil encounters in them at least a temperament capable of resisting it. But when a nation enfeebles itself by pleasure and becomes inflated in its lusts, its physical condition declines rapidly, and, at the first reverses of fortune, we see its children, unaccustomed to struggle and to suffer, grow weary of life, or even succumb to the assaults of madness. It is for you to cast a glance over your contemporaries, and to decide by this rule as to their progress in true civilization. Mayhap you will discover grave causes for apprehension; it may be also that, in presence of calamities which these generations inherit like all the rest, you will complain that God has conferred on us a gift so perilous, not

to say so fatal, as the passions; you will regret that liberty alone has not been given to us, and that beside her, pure and exalted power as she is, the passions have not laid down their tumultuous empire. But this would be an unjust complaint, the regret of a slave; if you were free without passion, you would doubtless accomplish good, but you would not love it enough. Passion in man is the sword of love, and he who would take it from him because of the evils of which it is the instrument, would be like to one who would break the lyre of Homer, because Homer has sung of false gods. Ah! break not the lyre! Take it from the hands of the blind poet, and sing upon it the name, the benefits, and the glory of the visible God. Sing; earth listens to you and heaven responds; for the lyre of Homer is also the lyre of David, and the passion which destroys man has saved the world on Calvary.—*Ibid.*

XCIX

Fortitude

HAVE you remarked the sentiment with which we are inspired by the peoples of antiquity whose history we have studied in our youth? No one placed before our eyes, for habitual study, the Persians, the Indians, or the Chinese, those races of the east, the oldest perhaps of all, and whom, by reason of their antiquity alone, some have from time to time desired, but without success, to introduce upon the living theatre of our age. The peoples with whom we have lived from our childhood, excepting that predestined nation

which possessed the deposit of all the truths and promises of God—those peoples, our ancient masters and our ancient friends, were, and still are, the Greeks and Romans. Why? Why these, and not the others? What potent charm still makes them our teachers, and places their books in the sacred hands which hold the Gospel open before a regenerated world? Perhaps you think that the cause lies in the beauty of their literature and their arts. And it is true that they have divinely written, spoken, sculptured their glory and their thoughts, admirable workmen of the intelligence, perfect models of taste, who will perhaps be equalled, but who will probably never be surpassed, and of whom it will ever be just to say with Horace:

> Graiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo
> Musa loqui.

But this is only the surface, only the first page of our admiration for them. There is a more profound cause, of which I would speak to you as I feel, and for which I have reserved until now my voice and my efforts.

Know then, and pardon me this emphasis, know that not only has justice been commanded us, that not only has it been said to us: Thou shalt respect right; but that right, justice, goodness, truth, all divine things have been entrusted to us, that we may be their guardians and avengers. Know that we are here below the prætorian guard of justice, the sword of right, the sanctuary which contains, and the army which protects them; for they have enemies, do not doubt it—immortal enemies, all those who hate what restrains them, all the blasphemers of order, because order condemns them,

strong battalions which genius sometimes leads, which sovereignty itself does not always disdain to keep in pay, and which, during six thousand years, have thwarted God and kept humanity in peril. Justice is but a doctrine, and every doctrine has behind it a pit, large and deep, ready to bury it; what saves it is the blood which it can pour in to fill up that pit. Now this blood is ours. And to give it, to shed it in torrents on present and possible occasions when justice will need it, we must have in our breasts a virtue quite other than prudence, temperance, and justice itself; we must have that final virtue which crowns the others by elevating them to the dignity of martyrdom, the virtue which Rome called fortitude—*fortitudo*,—and the Greeks by the very name of Rome; for Rome, in the Greek tongue, signifies fortitude, a prophetic name given by Providence to that city which it destined to govern the world by the empire of right and the empire of character.

For think you that Rome reigned by the sword of her legions, and that Greece conquered Asia by the lance and the shield? If you thought so, you would not even have a rudimentary idea of man or of God. Rome reduced the world, Greece conquered Asia, by virtues. Whilst the other human races, bent beneath a lifeless servitude, passed in obscurity through time, the genius of public life was awakened on Grecian soil and on the banks of the Tiber. Oratory created opinion, and, opinion giving birth to the responsibility of all before the conscience of all, power became a magistracy, the laws an expression of the natural relations of men with one another, obedience a respect for order, glory an ornament of the country, liberty a

right and a sentiment—the right of self-government and the sentiment of individual freedom. This new life of which Moses, on Sinai, had laid the foundation in the soul of another people, the elder brothers of Athens and Rome, this life brought forth virtues unknown to the East. It made man a citizen, that is to say, a public man; and, conscience growing with duty, energy showed itself in public manners, character assumed firmness, heroism appeared, and a cry of admiration went forth from the world to posterity, which hears it still and will never tire of it. Arising on the heights of Horeb, from the first people delivered from servitude, it has been repeated from the plains of Attica to the summits of Latium, thus uniting in the same immortality the name of the Maccabees with that of the Scipios, the memory of David and the remembrance of Philopœmen. Sublime fellowship of all that was illustrious, sacred council of all great souls and actions, amid which our childhood has lived, to which Christianity, without fear as without jealousy, has led for instruction the generations that were committed to it, and whence it has presented them from age to age, beneath a thrice holy shield, to the events and the sacrifices of ransomed humanity. There were formed the new peoples whom Clovis and Theodoric established upon the ruins of the old world, and whom Charlemagne united one day beneath the triple majesty of religion, of war, and of letters. There was born chivalry, that blooming flower of human sentiments purified in a divine faith; and thence it went forth to carry the cross to the tomb of the Saviour. There was prepared the age in which we live, an age of painful struggles, more vast than have hitherto

been witnessed, but amid which heroism, at solemn moments, has been wanting to no cause capable of inspiring it. Thus from the time of Moses to our own time, over a way of three thousand years, history has met with the same virtues as those which called it into existence. Contemporary of free peoples and of Christian peoples, it has lived for their glory, and while perpetuating that glory, has called forth an admiration which constitutes its own immortality.

But this moral force, born of public life, where does it abide? Whence does it come? Destined to aid us in enduring evil courageously, and to arm us with constancy in favour of justice, is there a place within us which is its natural abode or the foundation which sustains it? There is a line of poetry which I fancy is celebrated, so familiar is it to me, and which never fails, when it recurs to my memory, to excite in my soul a melancholy which I cannot sufficiently master. When Orestes, wandering on the plains of Tauris, finds himself, without knowing it, in the presence of a sister whom he loved and whom he had lost, there escape from the depths of his heart, at the moment of a happiness which he suspects not, these sad words:

Man learns each day to despise life.

The words are sublime, and the lesson is profound. Nevertheless, it is not the true sentiment; it touches, it moves, but it dejects us; it is the expression of feebleness, and not that of virtue. The true sentiment had been this:

Man learns each day to despise death.

Contempt of death—that is the principle of moral strength. So long as the conviction of

justice does not go thus far; so long as we fear to die, as if to die were anything but to live and to attain to God, there is nothing, on great occasions, to be hoped for from man. A threat will suffice to conquer him; he will float about, without character, at the mercy of events, and if history come to know him, it will know but his shame. It is the contempt of death which makes the soldier, which creates the citizen, which gives to the magistrate his toga, to the prince his safeguard amid perils and his majesty amid misfortunes. Charles I, King of England, had known many weaknesses, and at length one error which he committed, in separating his throne from the traditions of his country, placed him at the mercy of his enemies. It was, in the eyes of the multitude, a hopeless humiliation. But when the monarch, conquered and a prisoner, entered the chamber in which sat his accusers, now become his judges, he appeared there so calm and with such an air of authority, that respect robed once more his person in greatness; and while powerless to regain his throne and save his life, he was at least able to die with the certainty that he died like a king. The verdict of history has been with him, and his statue, erected at Whitehall, still fills with emotion the posterity who look upon it, and who admire, in such a depth of misery, so magnificent an instance of intrepidity of soul.

Young men, I turn to you. It is an old habit of mine, which you will pardon me. I have so often called upon you to walk the way of great things that it is not easy for me to exclude from my words your memory and your name. You have before you a long career; but if you prefer

life to justice, if the thought of death trouble you, that career, which you depict to yourselves as so beautiful, will sooner or later be obscured by weaknesses unworthy of you. As citizens, as magistrates, as soldiers, you will meet with hours in which by contempt of death alone can you say and do what is right, in which private virtues are no longer sufficient for man, but in which there is need of that intrepidity of soul which looks higher than this world, and which places there its life with its faith. If this faith be wanting to you, in vain will your country count upon you, in vain will truth and justice look upon you from heaven above, their eternal dwelling-place, and Providence bring about events capable of immortalizing your life. You will not understand them. Glory will pass before you, she will reach out her hand to you, and you will be unable even to tell her name.

But what is glory? The times are much changed since she had her altars. It is part of the lot of truth upon earth, of the universal expansion of justice, that there is henceforth to be question amongst us. Christianity has opened to us ways which antiquity knew not; everything has grown greater—justice, duty, responsibility, man, and the world. Consequently we need still higher virtues, greater sacrifices, and more manly souls. When the three hundred Spartans awaited, at Thermopylæ, the innumerable hordes of effeminate barbarism, they knew well that they must die, and one of them, desiring to leave an epitaph over the tomb of his brothers in arms, wrote with the point of his lance on the face of a rock the famous inscription: "Ye who pass by, go say to Sparta that we have died here in obedience to her sacred laws." There was

here, from whatever point of heaven or earth we regard it, an heroic spectacle, and Christian ages have not withheld from it their admiration. But, nevertheless, they had nearer to them other Thermopylæ, Thermopylæ bathed in a blood purer and more abundant. Like Greece, Christianity has had its barbarians to conquer, and the obscure defiles of the catacombs were the Thermopylæ wherein its faithful saved it by their death. Assuredly they also might have written upon the rock an inscription worthy of their martyrdom, and the inscription had no longer been, "Ye who pass by, go say to Sparta"; it would have been, "Ye who pass by, go tell mankind that we have died in obedience to the sacred laws of God." But He for whom they died had taught them a modesty of which ancient heroism had no idea. They died then without pride, unknown to Greece and to themselves, and when at length glory sought them beneath the earth, she found only their blood.—*3rd Conference of Toulouse.*

C

The Life that has not been lived in vain

THE feeling resulting from the good which has been accomplished under the eye of God includes a certitude which cheers and consoles more than anything else, the certitude that our life is useful and does not pass in vain. Lost as we are in the visible and invisible immensity of things, overwhelmed by the spectacle of earth and heaven, by the perspectives of history and the boundless horizons of the future, we cannot arrive at the persuasion of our littleness; our soul protests

against our senses; and, from the abyss wherein she seems to be prostrate and overwhelmed, she inspires the thought that we serve, and the invincible desire to serve with effect. I speak not of that commonplace utility, very noble though it is, of founding or perpetuating a family, of creating a patrimony for one's posterity, of advancing and honouring one's country, of leaving, in short, an honoured name to one's family. These things are good, but they do not satisfy the soul. Time is a limit which makes her tremble for her works, and the ruins accumulated through the ages tell her but too plainly of the vanity of so precarious a service. When the Consuls looked towards the Capitol, the temple of Jupiter showed itself to them above the destinies of the Republic, and, dear as Rome was to them, great as was the place it occupied in their hearts, they heard an obscure voice which demanded of them more, and prophesied to them of something beyond. What we need, that we may feel ourselves useful and value our life, is the certainty of labouring for something eternal, and we have it. We have it in virtue. Workers of a work begun by God, we bring to it a stone which the ages will never disturb, and how little soever may be our part in the common edifice, it will be there eternally. Thus, in the Middle Ages, people saw Christians quit their country to devote themselves to some cathedral which was being built upon the bank of a distant river; satisfied with their day's work, because it was fruitful, they gazed, when evening came, upon the structure, to see how far the work had risen towards God; and when, after twenty or thirty years of obscure labour, the cross shone upon the summit of the sanctuary raised by their hands,

they looked upon it for the last time, and, taking with them their children and their souvenirs, they went away without leaving their name behind them, to die in peace, with the blessed thought of having done something for God.—*4th Conference of Toulouse.*

CI

Virtue and the Needs of the Body

MAN is not all soul; he has a body, which is the organ and companion of his life, the child of God like the soul itself; and this body, destined as it is for immortality, has, during its sojourn here below, wants which neither peace, nor love, nor glory can satisfy. Will virtue, then, do anything for it? Will it nourish it, will it sustain it? O virtue, sacred root of all good things that dies not, thou hast given me peace, thou hast given me to love, thou hast given me to live usefully and with a consciousness of honour; but I have a body inseparable from me, a body, poor, naked, corruptible, which asks of me its daily bread: wilt thou give it to it? Hast thou pity on its earthly wants? or rather, insensible to this kind of evil as unworthy of thee, dost thou disdain to provide for it?

All the laws of the world are in harmony one with the other, and if virtue is useful to the soul it is undoubtedly so to the body. "I have been young," said David, "and now am old; and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread."* The honest, sober, and industrious man secures subsistence. It is the general

* Ps. xxxvi, 25.

rule, and very little experience of life is enough to prove it. The inability to obtain subsistence is traceable to outrage on some virtue, whether justice or temperance, whether prudence or energy; and if it may be justly attributed to unforeseen accidents, they are but the exceptions to a rule too evident to be denied. Virtue nourishes the soul, and the soul nourishes the body. You think, perhaps, that it does not do so generously. I admit it; for the more the soul is exalted and finds her joy in God, the less become the needs of the body. One of the most infallible signs of virtue is the progressive diminution of the needs of the body; and the sages of paganism, in disdaining riches, spoke by anticipation the language of the Gospel, and prophesied in their own way those words with which the new law opens: "Blessed are the poor!" Moreover, God, who is prodigal with us of spiritual gifts and places no bounds to peace and love and glory, infinite treasures from which each one of us may supply himself at his ease, God shows Himself sparing of corporal goods. He measures bread and water to us with a parsimony which would be frightful if the reason for it were not as I have said, and if there were not in abundance an active principle of corruption. Would it be just to reward virtue by giving it occasions of falling? The human race, then, is poor, and it will always be so, because true riches are in virtue.—*Ibid.*

CII

Does Virtue exist on Earth?

WHEN I spoke to you of virtue, and enumerated for you its famous divisions, prudence, justice, temperance, fortitude, did you not remark that one and all of them related to man, and that, while having their origin in God, they did not pass, in their application, the frontiers of humanity? What then? Is there no virtue of which God is the object? While all virtues have in Him their beginning and their end, do none tend to Him directly? That is impossible. There is a law regulating the mutual relations of all beings, and as every law implies a moral obligation in the intelligence which is cognisant of it and the liberty which accepts it, it follows either that there exist no relations between God and man, or that the relations, determined by a law, give to God rights over man, to man duties towards God, and consequently impose upon us a virtue which regards God directly. Let atheism deny it, and I can understand its doing so, for it does not admit the notion of a real and living infinity; but for the man who respects God in his conscience, after having acknowledged Him in his mind, it is impossible to believe himself without relations with God, and consequently without a law of those relations, a law which implies duties to be fulfilled, and a virtue which is the result of their accomplishment.

But what is this virtue which we have not yet named? What is there more vast than prudence, more holy than justice, more noble than

temperance, more magnificent than moral force? When these things are in the heart of man, is he not like to God? Has he not upon his brow the reflection of God's beauty? And where shall he find a better unction, or an influence more capable of raising him above himself? Ah! I am moved as you are by this aspect of the soul, and tremblingly I look there for what I seek, and which, mayhap, I shall not find.

Tell me, nevertheless, do you not think that, God being the most perfect of all beings, we owe Him what is most perfect in ourselves; that, since He contains all things in His infinity, we owe Him the highest result of our faculties, and what I will call the masterpiece of man? Yes; I am not mistaken. If anything in us is worthy of God, it is the supreme act of our life, that which in every being forms the summit of its nature and its activity. Oh! what then is, in us, this sacred summit? What is the masterpiece of man? Homer wrote the *Iliad*. Is the *Iliad* the masterpiece of man? Dante composed the Divine Comedy. Is the Divine Comedy the masterpiece of man? The Romans formed the kingly people. Was the kingly people the masterpiece of man? You smile, and with reason; the *Iliad*, the Divine Comedy, the kingly people—these were great things, and their reflection still illumines the highest summits of humanity. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the masterpiece of man is in another place. Where, then, is it?

If I say to a man, I esteem you, may I not say still more to him? Yes; for I can say to him, I admire you. If I say to a man, I admire you, may I not say still more to him? Yes; for I can say to him, I venerate you. If I say to a

man, I venerate you, may I not say still more to him? Have I exhausted in this word all human language? No; I have still a thing to say to him, one only, the last of all; I can say to him, I love you. Ten thousand words precede this one, and no other comes after it in any language; and when it has been once spoken to man, there is but one resource, and it is to repeat it to him for ever. Tongue of man can do no more, because his heart can go no farther. Love is the supreme act of the soul, and the masterpiece of man. His intelligence is there, as he must know in order to love; his will, as he must consent; his liberty, as he must make a choice; his passions, as he must desire, hope, fear, be sad, and rejoice; his virtue, as he must persevere, sometimes die, and devote himself ever.

Moreover, it is written that in God, in the mystery of His triple personality, it is love which comes last and limits even the infinite. Love terminates God, if it is permitted to use such an expression; and it is love also which terminates man. I offer no excuse for pronouncing its name in this sanctuary, at the very door of the tabernacle, wherein reposes the Divine Majesty; for if love have profaners who abuse its name, there are saints who serve as its guard, and prevent the least breath of uncleanness from tarnishing its immortal chastity.

Love being then the supreme act of the soul, and the masterpiece of man, what we owe to God is to love Him. The love of God is a virtue which we have not yet named, which crowns all other virtues, and opens to us, by means of the transformation it effects, the shortest way to our end. For it is peculiar to love that it unites those who love one another, that it blends their thoughts,

their desires, their sentiments, every outcome and possession of their lives. Even the love for finite beings acquires an energy which exalts man above himself; how much more the love of God! In Him it finds and imparts to us all that is wanting to our feeble nature. It finds God, and it gives to us God. Already like to Him by a similitude of nature and a similitude of beauty, already brought near to Him by the sympathy which is produced by similitude, our love lays hold of Him, and embraces Him in an ecstasy which will find later on its completion in the bosom of the vision, but which, even here below, is for us a prelude of the eternal embrace wherein our life will be consummated.

Having attained the zenith of the mystery, I am like a man who has for a long time been climbing a high and steep mountain, and who, at length, standing upon a solitary rock, looks upon the way which he has trodden, and the abyss which surrounds him on all sides. My head is giddy. I ask myself if what I have said to you is not an idle fancy of my thoughts, if virtue exists on earth, if in reality the heart of man is capable of a prudence which embraces the interests of humanity, of a justice which renders to each one his due in the order of the things of sense and the things of the soul, of a temperance which subjects the body to the law of the mind, of a fortitude which is ready to sacrifice life for right and truth. I ask myself if there are men who seek God as the term of their transient existence, as the certain principle of their felicity and their perfection. I ask myself, above all, if there are men who love God, not as we love men, but as we love the vilest creatures, a horse, a dog, the air, the water, the light, and

the heat. I ask myself these things; I ask myself first and you afterwards, and I await my reply and yours with inexpressible anxiety. I hear bold intellects say to me that virtue is but a name. I hear from the beginning to the end of history the protestation of sceptics, the sarcasm of egoists, the scoff of debauchees, the joy of fortunes acquired by the sweat and the blood of others, the plaintive cry of hearts which hope no longer; and, alone, from the height of that reasoning which has revealed to me the idea of the true, the good, the just, the holy, my thoughts upon what I have called my soul and upon what I again call God, I await a word which casts me down or confirms me for ever. Who will speak it to me?

It is I who will speak it to you. You seek the just man, the man of fortitude, the holy man, the man who loves God: I know him, and I am about to tell you his name. Eighteen centuries ago Nero reigned over the world. Inheritor of the crimes which had preceded him upon the throne, he desired to surpass them, and thereby to make for himself a name, in the memory of Rome, which none of his successors could equal. He succeeded in doing so. One day they brought before him in his palace a man laden with chains whom he had desired to see. This man was a stranger; Rome had not nursed him, and Greece knew not his birthplace. Nevertheless, questioned by the emperor, he replied as a Roman, but as a Roman of another race than that of Fabius and Scipio, with a liberty more grave, a simplicity more exalted, and an indescribable candour and profundity which astonished Cæsar. While they listened to him, the courtiers spoke with bated breath, and the last of

the tribune orators were agitated amid the silence of the Forum. Since that time the chains of that man have been broken; he has traversed the world. Athens has received him, and has convoked to confer with him what remained of the Portico and the Academy; Egypt has seen him pass before her temples, where he disdained to seek wisdom; the East has known him, and every sea has borne him. He has set his foot upon the shores of America, after having wandered in the forests of Gaul; and the coasts of Great Britain have received him as an expected guest. When the ships of the west, chafing at the barriers of the Atlantic, opened up new ways to new worlds, he sought them quickly as they, as if no land, no river, no mountain, no desert could escape the ardour of his toil and the empire of his word: for he spoke, and the same liberty which he displayed in presence of the enslaved Capitol was displayed in the face of the universe.

A traveller in my turn to the mystery of life, I met this man. He bore upon his brow the scars of the martyr; but neither bloodshed nor the course of ages had deprived him of the youthfulness of the body and the virginity of the soul. I saw him. I loved him. He spoke to me of virtue, and I believed in his. He spoke to me of God, and I believed in his word. His voice brought me light, peace, affection, honour, and the first-fruits of immortality, which detached me from myself; and, in a word, I learned, from my love of this man, that we can love God, and that indeed He is loved. I gave my hand to my benefactor, and I asked him his name. He replied to me, as he had replied to Cæsar: "I am a Christian."—*Ibid.*

CIII

Speech Reveals the Personality

YOU are before me; you are free to be silent, and thus to conceal from me what you are: but take care; if your lips move even once, you stand revealed. There will be in what you say to me, whatever it may be, an accent which will not deceive me. I will read in your words, in ineffaceable characters, first your intelligence, then its degree, the feebleness or the energy of your conception, the motives of your will, your character, and your heart. All will be laid bare to me. Words are the living expression of the soul; they flow from it as water flows from its source, and it is as impossible for you to disguise them as to exchange your personality for that of another. Terrible and beneficent instrument of the communion of minds, speech, which is their revelation, is also their glory and their chastisement. It reveals man, and it judges him; it betrays without confession the conscience itself.

But what if the conscience open itself and declare to us what it is? Then speech is no longer merely an expression, a light which shines externally from within; it takes the stranger and introduces him to the privacy of the domestic hearth, even there where the soul abides solitary and inviolable in communion with itself; we become, then, more than spectators, more than witnesses, we become guests; and confidence, that cherished secret of friendship, reveals to us in its fulness the invisible beauty of minds.

Therefore it is that a word once spoken may

never die. Descended from heaven to be the organ and representation of things unseen, it must needs be of eternity, and assume, fleeting as it is of its own nature, an indestructible form. Writing has accomplished this marvel. The written word is the image of the spoken word, as the spoken word is the image of the word of thought, as the word of thought is the image of the soul which thinks it and writes it. The fugitive sound, which issues from your mouth, perishes not; it is seized on its entry into the world by an art as divine as itself, and which will transmit to generations the living figure of your heart. For everything is written, every word has its book, and that which is not written upon earth by the hands of men is written in heaven by the hands of angels. Every day, every instant, the inexorable burin of divine justice catches the breath of your lips, and engraves it for your glory or your shame upon the tables of immortality.—*5th Conference of Toulouse.*

CIV

Public Life

In private life, man is face to face with himself; in public life, he is face to face with a people. In the former, his personal duties and rights, his own perfection and happiness command his solicitude; in the latter, the duties and the rights, the perfection and the happiness of a people preoccupy his thought. And, as a people is more than a man, public life is evidently superior to private life. Private life, in its exclusive aspect, is akin to egotism; its virtues even, if they soar

not into a vaster region, become easily corrupt under the empire of a narrow fascination.

Do you desire proof of this? open history. It has hitherto showed to us but two kinds of peoples: the one trained to public life, the other deprived on all sides of the direction of their affairs, and held in tutelage under a master who only allows them to live uncomplainingly under the laws which he gives them. But let us see the consequences to these latter nations of their condemnation to private life.

All public activity being impossible for them, riches alone remain to them as a means of elevation, and the acquirement of them as a serious occupation. The spirit of lucre possesses itself of all hearts. The native land, which is the theatre for great things, is changed into a place of commerce. It has traders for citizens, counters for tribunes, and the bank or the exchange for its Capitol. Its generations disdain letters, because they lead not to fortune; and if nature, ever fruitful in spite of men, still produces vigorous minds, we see them, deserters of their gifts and renegades of genius, transform their muse into a courtier, and through thirst for gold, betray modesty and truth. The poets aspire to the dignity of financiers, and the sound of glory appears to them a dream beside the ring of coin. Every office is judged by its rewards, every honour by its profits. The greatest names, if there be great names in such a society, appear in relation to works of industry; and these works, useful in the third or fourth place, assume ingeniously the first rank, which is not contested with them. Even those who administer general interests disdain not to enrich themselves like private people. No one knows that he is poor,

not even the rich. Luxury grows with cupidity, and this excess of indulgence divides the people into two fractions who have nothing in common: those who enjoy all, and those who enjoy nothing. Instead of the honour of taking part in public affairs exciting a generous ambition, and placing prominently in the community a glorious counterpoise to the base tendencies of human nature, as in those countries where there exists a public life, there is nothing to arrest, among the people of the private life, the course of selfishness and abjection. Cupidity begins, luxury follows, corruption of manners completes.

For a consequence of riches among the nations held in tutelage, not to say in servitude, is idleness; and idleness is inevitably the mother of depravity. What can one do with himself when he has not to earn his bread or his fortune, and when, in the midst of an abundance which excludes anxiety, he finds no responsibility inciting him to labour? On the other hand, where public life exists, every rich man is a public man, or may become so. When he is not occupied with his private interests, public interests engage his attention and solicit his genius and his heart. He reads in the history of his ancestors the example of those who honoured a great patrimony by great devotedness; and as the elevation of his nature responds to the independence which he has acquired or which he has received, the thought of serving the state opens to him a prospect of sacrifices and labour. He must speak, or write, or command by his talents, and must sustain those talents, however noble in themselves, by that other power, which is never eclipsed with impunity, virtue. From his early years, the son of the patrician, that is, of the

public man, looks forward with eagerness to the future which awaits him in public life. He does not disdain literature, for literature, as he knows, is the supremacy of mind, is, with eloquence and taste, the history of the world, the science of tyranny and liberty, the light imparted by time, the shadow of all great men descending from their glory into the soul which desires to resemble them, and bringing to it, with the majesty of their memory, the courage to do as they did. Literature is the palladium of true peoples: and, when Athens rose, she had Pallas for her divinity. It is only the peoples who are nigh their end that know not the value of literature, because, placing matter above ideas, they no longer see what enlightens, or feel what moves. But, among living peoples, the cultivation of letters is, after religion, the chief public treasure, the aroma of youth, and the sword of manhood. The young patrician delights in it, and devotes himself to it; he delights in it like Demosthenes; he devotes himself to it like Cicero; and all those images of the beautiful, while preparing him for the duties of the state, furnish him already with arms against the two precocious errors of his senses. From literature he proceeds to law. Law is the second initiation into public life. If among the peoples who are in thraldom it serves but for the defence of vulgar interests, among free peoples it is the threshold of institutions which build up or preserve. Thus are formed, amid profound meditations and magnanimous labours, the national elect of a country. If riches still produce voluptuaries, they also produce citizens. If they enervate some souls they fortify others. But where the country is no more than an empty temple, which expects from

us only silence and routine, there appears on all sides, in the midst of formidable indolence, an energetic debauchery. The activity of minds, if any remain to them, exhibits itself but to perish. Empty heads bear the weight of great inheritances, and used-up hearts trail themselves after dignities which resemble them. The corruption of the subjects extends to their masters. These, having no longer anything to do, because everything is permitted them, complete the devastation of manners; and all press on together to the place where Providence awaits the peoples unworthy to live.

Let us add, finally, one more characteristic.

In those countries in which public life exists, the citizen is inviolable; that is to say, his goods, his honour, his liberty, and his person are safe from arbitrary acts; and, being protected both by sovereign legislation and invincible public opinion, the law alone disposes of him; not a dead law, but the law living in a magistracy which itself is independent of all, except of its duties. This profound security, which crime alone can disturb, elevates the characters of men. Each one in his own home regards himself as a servant of the right in honourable obedience, but all-powerful against the errors of power, whatever it may be. A noble respect for the public interest, a sincere reverence for an authority which can do no evil, are the results of this self-confidence. All the citizens live in security upon the soil which God has given them; the injustices and such like evils which still are found amongst them are no more than accidents attached to human things, like those clouds which pass over the sky in the most favoured climes. How different it is in the countries of private life!

The law itself is subservient to the caprice of a will which cannot be anticipated; the magistracy, removable and dependent, obeys orders other than those of justice; and everybody, knowing that his lot is in the hands of one man, is absorbed by a fear which dominates his actions, his words, and even his thoughts. Cowardice, that basest of sentiments, becomes the soul of such a people. Hypocrisy finds its way behind fear, to diminish it; adulation, to dissimulate. Amid these three vices, which engender and justify one another, hearts become debased, characters degraded, nothing remains but servitude, and its consequent contempt.—*6th and last Conference of Toulouse.*

CV

The Catholic Church leavens the Christian Sects

WHEN there is question of the influence of Christianity, it is an error to divide it into fragments, and to urge against it the weakness of such or such of its parts, instead of considering as a whole its action upon humanity. Without doubt the Catholic Church alone possesses Christianity such as God has made it, with its hierarchy, its dogmas, its worship, and the full efficiency of its intercession and jurisdiction as affecting souls. But the Catholic Church is not limited by the apparent boundaries of her visible existence. Everywhere, even in the branches ostensibly separated from their primordial trunk, the Church sustains a regenerative sap, and produces effects of which the honour belongs to her. She it is

who is still the bond of schism, the cement, such as it is, of heresy; what remains to them of substance and cohesion results from the blood which she has infused into them, and which is not yet dried up, as we see branches which have fallen to the ground beneath the trunk which bore them preserve still a vegetation sensitive to the light and the dew. Death does not darken in a day the minds which truth once illumined. They long preserve reflections which enlighten them, impulses which animate them; and to set them in opposition to the source whence they have sprung, and which acts upon them, is to attribute to an ungrateful son the merits which he holds of his race, and of which treason has not wholly despoiled him. England, for instance, which is one of the exceptions to the social decay of Christian countries—what made England as she is? Is it since her schism that she has founded the institutions to which she owes peace in liberty, honour in obedience, and security even in agitation? We know well that it is not so. The British institutions are the monuments of an age when England paid to the Apostolic See the tribute which she herself called *Peter's Pence*, and the hand of a Catholic Archbishop of Canterbury, the faithful and magnanimous hand of Stephen Langton, has for ever left its impress upon the pages through which we trace back, from our own age to that of St Louis, the political traditions of Great Britain. Its genius and its laws have been formed under the influence of the Church, at the same sanctuary and in the same faith as gave to it for its sovereign St Edward the Confessor. The United States also, the offspring of Old England, have carried her customs to the virgin prairies of

America, and finding there no trace of antiquity permitting them to settle under the shade of a hereditary monarchy and an aristocracy of birth, they have made of the new world a republic animated by the Christian spirit, imperfect though it is, showing by example that public life is not confined to one form of government alone, but that it depends above all on the spirit which animates the people and the sincerity which orders their institutions. England reigns at home and abroad, because she has preserved the rights of her citizens, while adapting them gradually and sagaciously to the development of the ages, of ideas, and of wants; the United States reign in each state and over all the states, because, possessors of a new land, but heirs of an ancient spirit, they have transported the manners of their illustrious mother-country to the shores of their young civilization. Christianity is the parent of these two peoples and the guardian of their charters. Therefore it was that Count de Maistre, speaking of the future of the world, did not desire that England should become Christian, but Catholic, intimating thereby, in his language at once orthodox and penetrating, that what is wanting to England is not the faith which inspires, but the authority which guides. There is no parallel between a people devoted traditionally to heresy and a heretic who has become so through the perversity of his own heart. He has revolted, but the people have received their error; their ignorance of the truth is more apparent than their contradiction of it, and while all are not innocent in their ignorance, because they might overcome it, many have neither the time nor the light which would render their state criminal before God. They appertain, according

to the admirable expression of Catholic doctrine, *to the soul of the Church*, children unknown to their mother, although borne in her bosom, who still live by her substance, because they are the issue of her fruitfulness.—*Ibid.*

CVI

The Six Epochs of History

In the first epoch, which is developed from Adam to Moses, extending through twenty centuries, God lays the foundations of the paternity whence will come all the nations. Abraham, the recognized father, by the flesh or by the spirit, of the three stocks, Jewish, Christian, and Mussulman, occupies the highest point of this epoch, which has preceded and produced all the others; he is, according to the expression of the Scriptures, "the most magnificent name"* of far antiquity, the primordial chief "of many nations,"† "the father of all the believers"‡ in one God, Creator of heaven and of earth. His memory, preserved in the sacred books the most ancient and the only authentic, has passed thence into other books which still command the faith and respect of a great part of the human race. From this man, from his name, from his blood, from his memory, proceed the peoples to whom the empire of the world and of civilization was finally reserved. Abraham is the king of ages, and the future, proceeding from him as from its primary source, will bear his glory even to the extreme limits at which time will end in eternity.

* Gen. xii, 2. † Gen. xvii, 4. ‡ Rom. iv, 11.

After him, the work of universal paternity being accomplished, the second epoch and the second work, that of legislation, commences with Moses. Standing on Sinai, Moses hears and writes; he hears and he writes a law from which thirty-three centuries have not taken a syllable, which Athens received, which Rome venerates, which conscience makes her own, and which Jesus Christ, come from God to consummate all, declares also to be His law. This law, in forming a people pure in their doctrine and immortal in their life, prepares for the entire world a legislation which will have no bounds, based upon a tradition which will have no rival, and long before that happy day it produces, in order to hasten it, David and Solomon, who are in this second age what Abraham is in the first, as Moses is on Sinai, what Adam is in Eden.

This being accomplished, that is to say, universal legislation being established upon universal paternity, another order appears: Romulus founds Rome, and Greece assumes organization at the Olympic games. These two inseparable eras, the Roman era and the era of the Olympiads, open at the same time, for two peoples, the reign of letters and that of political unity. The direction of human affairs passes from the east to the west; the east has brought forth ancestors and promulgated the law; the west is about to give to thought forms which will not perish, and to scattered cities bonds which will bring them together under one yoke, until the time which will unite them in one fraternity. Athens becomes the home of the beautiful, the mother and the mistress of the arts, Rome, the centre of a government like unto none other,

where liberty will not shine upon all, but will have nevertheless a name, a country, a tribune, examples and guarantees which will extend over better times their immortal protection. After Pericles, Greece declines; after Augustus, Rome degenerates; and these two men, each in his time and in his province, mark the most splendid period of the third epoch of history.

The world possessed thenceforth, never more to lose them, four elements of life: common ancestors, a universal law, a literature assured by its perfection of a never-ending empire; in fine, political unity under a people who had abused their power, but who had acquired it amid civil struggles in which the science of law had flourished. This was much, but not all. A soul was still wanting to these scattered elements which came together from all sides. He whom the ancients announced and the law prophesied, He who was obscurely *the expected of nations*,* Jesus Christ comes into the world, bringing to it a new age with a new principle of life, a principle which will never be either destroyed or surpassed, and which, by its progress amid vicissitudes, will mark with its sign every epoch which the future will inaugurate. Five centuries, from Augustus to Clovis, suffice for Christianity to transform the ancient world, by accomplishing all it hoped for, and appropriating what it possessed of justice and truth. Constantine marks the highest point of this fourth epoch. He is the first of the emperors to apprehend what has passed away and appreciate what exists; he raises up from beneath the axe, still uplifted, the religion of peace; the cross appears on the ensigns of Rome, and Christianity reigns the day

* Gen. xlix, 10.

after the executioner proclaimed it dead. But as Jerusalem had declined under the posterity of the Maccabees, as Athens fell when she surrendered her liberty to licence and her language to the rhetoricians, as Rome had descended from the Scipios to Tiberius, Christianity also met in its triumph with a trial, before which it would have gone down had it not as a father Him who alone, in giving the victory, is able to save the victorious.

What violence could not effect to enfeeble and divide Christian society, the heresies, born within the shadow of the courts, attempted, not without success. The empire, in transferring its seat far from Rome, in order to fly at once the memories of ancient liberty and the remains, still breathing, of idolatry, had failed to create in its new capital institutions and manners worthy of Christianity. It protected without honouring it, too often without knowing it, and twenty schisms, precursors of the supreme schism which was to separate the East from the West, subjected the sanctity of the Gospel to the opprobrium of a persecution in which Christians themselves were the persecutors. These sad quarrels, joined with the catastrophes of a power, passing, as chance directed, from hand to hand by intrigues or revolts, precipitated at once the Church and the Empire into a decadence which, had the former not escaped from it, would have given the lie to the divinity of her mission.

The barbarians put an end to this state of things by destroying the ancient world. Then was seen a society in which all was new—peoples, manners, languages, institutions—and where nevertheless religion flourished, the heir of all

the past, holding in her hand the history and the laws of the past, speaking with her mouth the idioms of Greece and Rome, enveloping, in short, the second cradle of the world in the seamless purple of every good born of all time. It was the vessel escaped again from the universal shipwreck, and bearing within her the incorruptible seeds of regeneration. It would need a long time to tell all about this fifth epoch of human history: what enemies it had to conquer, within, because of the resurrection of the old Roman empire with its prejudices and its pride; without, because of the terrible advent of Islamism; what were its tastes, its thoughts, its establishments, its liberties; what its good things and its evil, ever in their totality impressed with a grandeur which surpassed that of Rome and created the character of the modern man, generous, gentle, loving, industrious, desirous of progress, honouring obedience by a noble measure of liberty, preparing by his works as by his aspirations the future unity wherein walks the human race. It has been easy to calumniate this age because of what was child-like and unformed in the peoples which composed it; but in proportion as the science and sentiment of history, awakened by our revolutions, have been developed amongst us, we have better understood what was the life of our immediate ancestors, and how magnificent has been the heritage which they have left us. St Louis marks the supreme point of this epoch, which lasted a thousand years from Clovis to Luther. A man singular by the diversity of his virtues, St Louis sums up in his person the entire middle age. An ascetic, yet loving, he read

his breviary on the eve of battle. Armed with the cross against the infidels, with the sword against the enemies of the crown and of France, of unswerving uprightness towards all, he was the last hero of the crusades, the arbiter of kings, the father of peoples, the purest being that ever held a sceptre; and his palace, which still stands between Notre-Dame and the Louvre, has merited to be, even to our day, the temple where justice has her seat.

The ages of Pericles and Augustus were greater in literature than the age in which St Louis appears to us with Innocent III, St Francis of Assisi, St Dominic Guzman, St Bonaventure, and St Thomas of Aquin; but none surpassed it in ardour of faith and in the conceptions of the intelligence. Neither has any age been followed by an epoch more energetically desirous of destroying that which preceded it. Up to that time, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Jesus Christ through David, from Jesus Christ to Clovis through Charlemagne, Christianity had advanced progressively, and even the blood of martyrs had been but an increase in glory and fruitfulness.

But from the death of St Louis the mighty waters of truth gradually receded, and Luther, in founding Protestantism, inflicted on the living body of the universal Church a wound which three centuries have not closed, and which Voltaire, the prince of this sixth epoch, enlarged by infusing the poison of the first infidelity which ravaged the Christian world. What distinguishes Protestantism is not the alteration or the negation of such or such a dogma; Protestantism might subsist even while accepting every symbol of the Catholic Church, for it is not, in

its essence, either a particular heresy or a confluence of heresies. Protestantism is a profound hatred of the priesthood founded by Jesus Christ, a desperate effort to do without man in the relations of the soul with God. Everything else is a consequence of this primitive aversion. Let a Protestant only believe that a man is the authorized minister of God, His real vicar on earth, and he will abjure without difficulty, be they ever so numerous, the errors in which he is involved. The weak point of the Protestant is that he cannot admit a mediatory atmosphere between the sun and him, as the weak point of the unbeliever is that he no longer sees when a cloud is interposed between the light and his eyes.

Five ages of faith and of creation elapsed before God permitted the negative epoch in which we find to-day the history of humanity. The supreme contest between truth and error, between good and evil, this epoch will decide the common lot. If the temperament of man, as sixty centuries of active Providence have constituted it, be strong enough to reject the poison which devours him, we may look for the most exalted of all miracles, which is a resurrection. If, on the contrary, our enfeebled intelligence discern not the elements of salvation which remain to us, or if, while discerning them, our will respond not to the greatness of our duties, we can only hope for the final joys of pride which repel life and despise death.

Therefore it is that souls, occupied with God and with man, interrogate with sorrowful anxiety the signs of the time. As the Stoics, the only noble remnant of the beautiful ages of antiquity, thought of the future in their virtues, the souls who still have faith, the

living remains of love grown cold, raise their anxious eyes to the horizon of an age which has made so many ruins, and which has hoped for so much from its ruins. As for myself, after them and very far from them, I gaze also: my gaze is already a hope, and, sad though it be, a consolation.—*The Law of History.*

CVII

The Marriage of Ozanam

THERE was a snare which Ozanam did not avoid. As soon as he was happy, he desired to communicate his happiness, and to increase it by making another a sharer in it. Shall I say, although God absolved him by blessing his union, that he was still very young for a felicity so hostile to the great muses? Like the priest, the literary man is consecrated; and if the ministry of souls demands a sacrifice of self, the ministry of thought, when one is worthy of it, also demands austerities. It is difficult, in the midst of domestic joys, to keep constantly at work and leave the mind free, and more difficult still to restrain one's wants within the modest limits of one's resources. Poverty is the inevitable companion of the literary man who has resolved to sell his pen neither to gold nor power; and poverty is sweet only to the solitary man who lives in the immortality of his conscience, and has never more than one misfortune to foresee or to bear. But Ozanam was of an age when people do not wait, and he yielded to the certainty of making happy with him a Christian purchased with the same blood as himself.—*Frédéric Ozanam.*

CVIII

Bossuet's History of the Variations

WHEN we read Bossuet's "History of the Variations," one of the things which strike us most forcibly in that masculine genius is his gentleness. He holds beneath his rod—and it was the most terrible the hand of man had wielded since Moses—he holds beneath it the first authors of a disastrous schism, which had torn from the Church one half of the world, and created evils whose immensity the glance of Bossuet took in with horror. Nevertheless, nowhere will you find intemperance of language; you will find only a powerful yet calm argument, a serious development of truth; and when the actors must inevitably appear with their weakness and their crimes, we feel that the historian is too firmly established in peace to insult them. He exhibits the great culprits as they were, without omitting anything that may excite interest in them; and, as if to repose after a spectacle so painful to him, he devotes an entire chapter to lamenting the soul and the memory of Melancthon. It was thus, because Bossuet was of those in whom the Gospel is diminished neither by defect of view nor by the passions and inclemency of the heart. He had his right hand upon the *Lion of Juda*, and his left upon the *Lamb* slain from the beginning of the world. A man can hardly so form himself; he is made so by God, when God, to move the world, wills to unite tenderness with genius in the same creature.—*Ibid.*

CIX

The People and the Bourgeoisie

THE people, who are the instruments of revolutions, must gain something by them; and the antichristian revolution must bring some benefit to the people, lest they may see that the poor profit only through Jesus Christ. The agrarian law of the ancients was simply cupidity; the agrarian law of the moderns is a struggle against Christianity. When men have lost faith in the words, "Blessed are the poor," and the innumerable works have been destroyed whereby were fulfilled those other words, "The poor have the Gospel preached to them," the abyss must needs be filled up. The first revolution filled it up as best it could, with the property of the nobility and the clergy, and by means of the law which established amongst families the equal division of inheritances; but the gulf soon devoured that prey. From the very food which has been cast into it, there has sprung a race of proletariats still more numerous and more hungry; they cry out in their turn, they demand their share, they demand it of those who are to-day the sole possessors of it, of those who are called, with such terrible contempt, the *bourgeois*.

What, in fact, is a bourgeois in the eyes of the proletariat? He is the heir of the bishops, of the abbots, of the nobles. He is an avaricious noble, amassing wealth for his family, without retainers and without compassion. He is an abbot who shuts the gate of the monastery against the poor man, while throwing to him at

most a miserable crust, instead of opening it to him, warming him, serving him at table, then leading his noble guest into the decorated and illuminated church, into the midst of holy things, of music, and of incense, so as to gladden him with a little joy, that, praising God, he may continue his pilgrimage. He is a prevaricating bishop, who has deliberately extinguished in the heart of the poor man the faith and hope and charity which nourished him, the only good he possessed, and which prevented his envying those more fortunate than himself. How was it possible that property in such hands should not again be exposed to overthrow? How could the question of liberty, far from insignificant at the present time for the people, fail to be transformed into a civil war between those who have and those who have not, between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie? This peril was inevitable, and the revolution of 1830, in revealing it, exposed the social powerlessness of the eighteenth century.—*The Philosophy of De la Mennais.*

CX

The Fruitlessness of Philosophy

THE manifest inability of the sages of antiquity either to form superior minds into a school one and universal, or to deliver nations from the abyss of superstition, furnished Catholic writers with an everlasting proof of the necessity for another teaching of truth. If a Providence governed the world, if man was not condemned to ignorance of his destiny and of his duty, it was impossible that there could be upon earth no

other teaching than that of the philosophers, no other way than that of reasoning, for penetrating the secrets of things invisible; because during so long a time, with such diversity of minds, with East and West brought together by war and travel, nothing was accomplished save the creation of sterile disputes, the implanting here and there in the solitudes of doubt, of some celebrated names, who transmitted to latest posterity a *magnificent testimony* of human impotence. In the days of the Fathers of the Church, this testimony shone in all its brilliancy; scattered around were the remains of that society which was anterior to Christ; experience had shown the vanity of the efforts of philosophy, and there were few schools whereof the fragments had not accompanied the creative march of the Church across the decadence of the times; so that the whole earth, seeing the living and the dead pass by, might judge where was to be found the eternal breath of truth. Many of the Fathers of the Church had themselves worn the mantle of philosophy; they had sought the true from school to school, and when they proclaimed to the world, with St Paul, "The Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified," the infinite power of God uttered by their lips words which wrought indescribable conviction, and the nations cried aloud with them: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." * At the present day we begin to understand afresh the

* 1 Cor. i, 20, 21.

force of this demonstration; and it will ever go on increasing in the intelligence of men, as the revival of philosophy will present to us still more striking evidences of its nothingness. For each time that experience is repeated with the same success, it acquires a more undisputed right to the empire of minds; and this time philosophical experience has had peculiar characteristics, still more calculated to make human wisdom despair. In fact, the philosophers had no longer as of old laboriously to seek the truth. Enlightened by the light of the Gospel, they thought but of despoiling Christianity and dividing between them the garment of Jesus Christ. And, nevertheless, they have not equalled the ancient philosophers, either in elevation of genius or purity of doctrine, or the duration of their schools; they have not had Socrates laying down his life for a truth which was in advance of his generation. These minds, envious of Christianity, gloried in descending beneath the level of their times, and their ashes were scarcely cold when humanity, the avenger of Christianity, passed scornfully over their tomb. Their successors, who despise them, know not themselves what to do; they have not, properly speaking, a school in all Europe; the humblest village curé is more powerful than a philosopher, and we hear on all sides, issuing from souls athirst for doctrine, a plaintive cry, like the cry of the bird which seeks on the seashore its little ones carried away by the waves.

Philosophy being unable to destroy and replace Christianity, Christianity has more than ever the right to affirm that, if there be not in the world another teaching of truth, truth is but a sacred name, impotent to cure the soul and to unite men. Christianity, in saying this, does

not make profession of scepticism, with which it has been reproached; it does not pretend that nothing is certain; it remarks only that intelligences have never been healed and united by the process of demonstration. The existence of God has indeed been philosophically demonstrated, but this demonstration, beautiful as it is, will never unite two men together. And this because reasoning, however potent to establish, is a thousand times more active in dividing, and never does it take the first place without destroying all. Permit it, in the study of nature, to dethrone experience, and forthwith you will no longer have learned bodies, you will no longer have science, you will have but a vain mass of contradictory mysteries. Permit it to govern society, and, instead of nations united as one family, you will have but political parties, armed to destroy one another, amongst whom experience alone will establish here and there, upon the field of battle, an appearance of peace. Experience is, in all things, the foundation of order, and therefore it is that God has not saved the world by reasoning, but by the experience of the cross, the most beautiful and the most conclusive experience which has ever been known here below.

If we seek to know why experience is the foundation of science, of society, of religion, of order, in a word, we shall perhaps find that reasoning is exclusively a human work, experience a work partly divine; that man in reasoning endeavours to draw truth from himself, and that in experience he draws it from the bosom of God; that in the former case he desires to give to himself more than life, namely, truth; that in the latter case he but aspires to

receive truth from the hand which has given him all; that reasoning considered in itself, independently of all the experience on which it rests, is therefore an act of pride, whilst experience, whereby the mind only accepts what is external to it and independent of it, is an act of humility; that, in fine, pride divides men and humility unites them. The man of science submits himself to God in interrogating nature, the politician in studying the indestructible laws of society in the events of the world, the Christian in seeking and in adoring the ways of God upon the earth; the philosopher does not trouble himself about nature, or history, or the Divine Word, he seeks in himself, by reasoning, how things ought to be, and he pronounces that they are so, or that they are not so. Ought we to be astonished that God strikes him with impotence, and that his lips render sterile even truth itself? However this may be, the fact is incontestable that philosophy has failed to unite men around the most successful demonstrations; it is also incontestable that at a certain stage philosophy loses every trace of truth, and is no longer anything more than a science of augury wherein thought *vanishes*, according to the expression of St Paul. If, then, invisible things have not been brought down to our level, if there has been no communication between earth and heaven, if God has not imparted in time and space some great experience of eternity and the infinite, we must lose hope; truth is not for us, it passes far above our heads, like those profound stars of the firmament which appear to us at night, when the fruitful light of the sun no longer illumines the earth. The man who travels in the evening, solitary and weary, stops from time to time, resting upon

his staff, which seems tired like himself, and raising to heaven his sublime countenance, he gazes long into the heaven at the army of the Lord; he revolves in his mind the terrific distance whence comes to him that sweet light; he feels how little he is, and lost in the contemplation of this great and fathomless mystery, so far removed from him, he continues his journey weary and unconsoled.—*Ibid.*

CXI

Miracles of Christianity

GOD has made Christianity a miracle of unity. Whilst men cannot continue a work of fifty years in the same spirit; whilst the present age destroys the thought of the age which preceded it, there is in the Divine Word, transmitted by so many different tongues, a unity unbroken during sixty centuries, a conspiracy of six thousand years, for which each conspirator has paid with his head, or which he has sanctified by his virtues.

A miracle of historic certitude. Ordinarily, peoples live or die; none of them, asleep amid their ruins, have left around their tomb an immortal guard to render testimony to all comers of their past existence, of their glory, of their shame, of their misfortunes, of their traditions, of their faith. By an exception worthy of remark, Christian history, the only history which is truly ancient, and which reaches back, period by period, in regular co-ordination to the most remote ages—Christian history, attested from the time of Christ by a living people spread over the world, is attested before the time of Christ by a people who are neither living nor dead,

a sort of mysterious spectre, laden at once with years and with reproach, and who wander untiringly through the four quarters of the earth, to the sole end that they may say in every tongue, to each generation, "we were."

A miracle of power. What has Christianity not conquered? It has resisted ignominy, persecution the longest and the most atrocious to which any doctrine has been exposed, prosperity, ignorance, barbarism, the revolt of its own children, human passions, science, genius, time which destroys all, man who has never respected his own works. Alone among the different religions, Christianity has undergone the ordeal of human reason; and the liberty of the press, which would overthrow in thirty years the religions of Asia and Africa, has combated during three centuries the Gospel and the pope, without taking anything from that force which terrifies at the hour of death every man who is not an ignorant man.

A miracle of science and philosophy. No science has succeeded in discovering a self-contradiction in the Bible; history, chronology, astronomy, linguistics, monuments, antiquities of every kind, have borne testimony, despite the learned, in favour of the divine word, and the first page of Genesis was in accord, more than three thousand years ago, with the secrets of geology discovered in our time.

A miracle of civilization. Amongst what races of the present day is the lot of women, of children, of the poor, of all who are weak, the happiest? Amongst what peoples are the sciences and the arts cultivated? Does not Europe hold the sceptre of the world; and if America has escaped from her, is it not because America has become Christian?

A miracle of sanctity. One day the hearts of Christians will be revealed: the actions of the right hand, which are unknown to the left, will be manifested; but while we await the revelation of the double mystery of virtue and crime in this world, it is still possible to compare Christian morals with the morals of antiquity, and to judge of the ineffable power of the cause which has sanctified the heart of man by purity.

A miracle in the order of the beautiful. In the hands of an obscure people, insignificant numerically, and despised by other nations, there is found a book which would be the greatest monument of the human mind, if it were not the word of God, and to which even its enemies have been forced to render this homage. Homer has not equalled the recital of the lives of the patriarchs in Genesis; Pindar did not attain the sublimity of the prophets; Thucydides and Tacitus are not comparable to Moses as a historian; the laws of Exodus and Leviticus have left far behind them the legislation of Lycurgus or Numa; Socrates and Plato were surpassed, even before the Gospel, by Solomon, who has left us, in the Canticle of Canticles, the most admirable song of divine love with which created lips have been inspired, and in Ecclesiasticus, the hymn, eternally melancholy, of fallen humanity; lastly, the Gospel, in completing the destiny of this unique book, has placed upon it the seal of a beauty unknown before, and which, still inimitable, has, like Christianity itself, found nothing comparable to it on earth.

The ancients said that the sage, amid the silence of the night, could hear the music of the heavenly spheres fulfilling in space the harmonious laws of creation: thus the heart of man,

when its passions are silent, may hear in the midst of the world the eternal voice of truth. Religion is a lyre suspended in heaven which, agitated at one and the same time by the divine breath and by that of men, gives forth sounds sad as those of a suffering soul and joyous as those of an angel, but always superior to humanity, and which ingratitude alone discerns not. —*Ibid.*

CXII

No Complete Defence of Christianity

People are sometimes astonished that a complete defence of Christianity does not exist. It is because, on the one hand, time, which never stands still, multiplies ceaselessly the proofs of it; and because, on the other hand, the objections which reasoning makes to it, infinitely variable as they are, are despised by the human mind at the end of fifty years. In the defence of Christianity there is therefore one part which of necessity remains incomplete, and another part which becomes useless; but it is in this precisely that its truth is more apparent. For the part which has become useless proves the vanity of reason, which, after a few years, no longer comprehends the objections which it made or the replies which have been given to it, and the part which has remained incomplete shows the logical vigour of a religion of which the evidence grows with time.—*Ibid.*

CXIII

Philosophy in the Church

WHAT has been the *rôle* of philosophy in the Church? The *rôle* of a stranger admitted to the domestic hearth, and become through gratitude a faithful servant. Jesus Christ left to the Church no other philosophy than the Gospel, instituted no other school than that which is entered by baptism, threw no light upon the question of certitude save by purifying the hearts of men by the omnipotence of divine grace. He healed souls in order to unite minds. His disciples did as He. They transmitted the grace and the word which they received, continuing to unite the peoples despised by philosophy and the sages divided by it, and thus proving that a new element from heaven had penetrated the depths of humanity. Nevertheless, when the divine word had, despite all the efforts of imperial power, rallied the nations beneath the cross, when the blood of martyrs became more rare, philosophy began to flourish in the Church. The Platonists being converted remembered lovingly their old master; they believed that they found in Christianity the realization of the most beautiful ideas of Plato, whether it had conceived them of itself, or had imbibed them from an ancient tradition; they concluded from their own experience that philosophy, being a seeking after truth, drew some men from gross indifference regarding things invisible, and prepared them for faith. Moreover, if philosophy was vain as a foundation for truth, truth once known might be

confirmed by philosophy. For reasoning upon what is established is very different from reasoning upon what is not established. Before Michael Angelo, in raising the cupola of St Peter's at Rome, had transported the Pantheon of Agrippa into the air, people could dispute endlessly as to the merits of such an enterprise; to-day the first-comer kneels beneath the immensity created by Michael Angelo, and discovers without difficulty a thousand conclusive reasons for admiring it. But Christianity includes in its divine plenitude thoughts the purest, the greatest, the most necessary, the most clearly demonstrated in the world; it is the Pantheon of human reason, built by the hand of God, and cemented by His blood. Before the Eternal Geometrician had formed it, the sages tried in vain to construct it; the stone laid by one was removed by another: it was the confusion of Babel. But since it is complete, who will forbid man to measure its length, its height, its depth? Who will prevent reason seeing itself reflected in the most magnificent of its works?

Thus philosophy, impotent as a foundation for truth, was judged useful to the Church as a preparation for faith, as a confirmation and exposition of faith. Such is its *rôle* in the Church; it has never had any other.—*Ibid.*

CXIV

The Centre of Unity

THERE was needed for the universal Church, destined to traverse all the vicissitudes of time, a power to maintain in her the triple unity of

life, intelligence, and love, which she has received from her Divine Architect; for it was not enough to have received, it was necessary to preserve. If Jesus Christ had remained visible upon earth, He would have been Himself the power to lead all to Him, the centre whence had gone forth, or to which had returned, to be spread abroad again, all the rays of truth. It pleased Him, however, not to immortalize His sensible presence amongst us, but to leave us His presence concealed beneath the symbols of life, and His word contained in tradition and in the Scriptures; all which things, being incapable of defending themselves against division, needed a depositary one and permanent, who would be the supreme organ of the evangelical word, and the inviolable source of universal communion. It was necessary that Jesus Christ in heaven, still the mysterious bond of His Church, should have in this world a vicar who would be the visible bond, the living oracle, the fruitful and dominant unity. It was of all miracles the greatest to work, and among the supernatural events of which the history of Christianity is full, there is not one which affords more matter for meditation, and in which the hand of God is more visible.

How is it possible to place in the midst of the world, to be the chief of an unique religion and of a society spread all over the world, a defenceless man, an old man who will be the more menaced, as the growth of the Church in the universe will augment the jealousy of princes and the hatred of her enemies? How rest the destiny of religion upon a single head, which the first soldier who comes may cut off, or which the caress of an emperor can seduce? How save this precious head from so many passions which

will array themselves against it, from impiety, from schism, from heresy, from wars, from the infinite vicissitude of empires and of opinions, in fine, from those chances of the future which one day or another destroy all? What has become of the patriarchs of Constantinople, the metropolitans of Moscow, the caliphs of the Mussulman? They who reflect on this difficulty, having some knowledge of the men and affairs of their time, will find it considerable; and they who examine it by the light of history will be astonished that it has been overcome. It is so, nevertheless. The vicar of God, the supreme pontiff of the Catholic Church, the father of kings and peoples, the successor of the fisherman Peter, is living; he raises among men his head bearing a triple crown and the sacred burthen of eighteen centuries; the ambassadors of nations are at his court; he sends his ministers to all creatures, and even into places which have not yet a name. When from the windows of his palace he looks abroad, he sees the most illustrious horizon in the world, the land trodden by the Romans, the city which they built from the spoils of the universe, the centre of things under their two principal forms, matter and spirit; where all peoples have passed, whither all glories have come, to which all cultivated imaginations have, at least in spirit, made a pilgrimage; the tomb of the martyrs and the apostles, the focus of all memories, Rome! And when the pontiff extends his hands to bless it conjointly with the world, from which it is inseparable, he can render to himself a testimony which no other sovereign will ever render to himself, namely, that he has not built, or conquered, or received his city, but that he is its essential and never-failing life, that he is in it as the blood in the heart of man.—*The Holy See.*

CXV

The Site of Rome

I DESIRE to point out to you the characteristics of the place where Rome is built. It is so sublime and singular that one may travel all his life, and his imagination will fail to gather from any other place under heaven memories like unto the memories of the *agro romano.* Rome is built about the middle of the Italian peninsula, more to the south than the north, and, as a set-off, more to the west than the east. It stands on some hills separated by what are rather ravines than valleys, on the banks of the Tiber, a river yellow and deep, which rolls its waters slowly between its verdureless banks. Five or six leagues to the east is the sombre line of the Apennines; four or five leagues to the west, the white and brilliant line of the Mediterranean may be seen from some elevated points; on the north rises an isolated mountain which is called Soracte, and which stands there like a giant on the boundary of the plain; to the south are the hills on which may be traced Castel-Gondolfo, Marino, Frascati, and Colonna. Between these four horizons, of which no one resembles the other, and which are rivals in grandeur and beauty, lies, like a great eagle's nest, the Roman campagna, the site of many extinct volcanoes, a vast and stern solitude, a shadowless prairie, where the rare streamlets furrow the soil and conceal themselves amid their willows, where the trees which appear here and there are as motionless as the ruins which meet the eye on all sides—tombs, temples,

aqueducts, the majestic *débris* of nature and of the Roman people, in the midst of which Christian Rome has erected her holy images and her tranquil domes. Whether the sun rise or set, or summer or winter pass by; whether the clouds traverse space, or the air assume a soft transparency, according to the seasons and the hours, all is change, all is life, all is stillness; an endless variety plays around this motionless region, like the religion whose antiquity is allied with youth, and which borrows from time an indescribable charm to cover its eternity. Religion is stamped on these wondrous aspects of nature; the mountains, the plains, the sea, the ruins, the air, the soil itself—a mingling of the ashes of men with the ashes of volcanoes—everything is profound; and he who walking along these Roman ways has not felt arise within his heart the thought of the infinite communing with man, ah! that man is to be pitied, and God alone is great enough ever to give to him an idea and a tear.—*Ibid.*

CXVI

Prudence of the Holy See

THE error of many men who are at the head of human affairs, or who desire to attain to it, is to pretend to create the world. Some desire to create society, others religion, others a party, and the most moderate confine themselves to a desire to create the future. All these men waste their minds and their lives in this painful labour, and it almost invariably happens that events convince them before they die that they have actually accomplished the contrary of what they

desired. Read history attentively, and you will learn one of the saddest things for human pride, namely, the perpetual contradiction between the will of man and the result of his efforts. If any one had told Alexander what would be the lot of his family and his empire after his death, he would have astonished him. If any one had shown the Romans the future of their conquests and the future inheritor of their city, he would have given them something to think of. If any one had revealed to Pilate all that lay in the fugitive moment when he washed his hands of the death of the Just, he would doubtless have annihilated him by the awfulness of the vision. He alone knows what he does who serves God in His Church, and who, knowing that every movement of the universe tends but to develop the germs of creation and grace, respects profoundly in his acts the natural and logical course of things, which leads them to their end by the shortest as well as the happiest way. This has been a virtue of the sovereign pontiffs, and the rational basis of their divine prudence. Placed face to face with two worlds, the spiritual world and the material world, skilful workmen of eternity, they have known that they act not directly upon time, but that sooner or later, by a combination of agencies whereof God alone has the secret, passing things must subserve the triumph of permanent things, and, despite their stubborn resistance, cast themselves finally, palpitating and vanquished, into the arms of truth. The Holy See has witnessed many of those solemn moments in which time and eternity meet; but it knows not their epochs, and it knows not the roads which, in the indeterminate sphere of the possible, lead the finite and the infinite the one

to the other. Therefore it is that, ever and actively occupied in diffusing life, light, and love, whereof it is the depositary, it neither calls upon nor creates events; it receives them from the hand of God, who produces or permits them, limiting itself, when they are accomplished, to acting with regard to them in accordance with the ordinary rules of Christian wisdom. This *rôle* is not brilliant; but as it is founded upon nature itself, it has merited for the Holy See a position peculiar to it, and incomparable in duration and legitimacy with any other political position.—*Ibid.*

CXVII

The Temporal Power of the Popes

How have all great empires been founded? By war, followed by victory and possession; that is to say, by violence redeemed by time. If, on the contrary, you seek the source of the temporal sovereignty of the Holy See, you will find it in four circumstances which concurred at the same time, and which no foresight could have brought together, nor, excepting the last, could it have brought about a single one of them. I refer to the decadence of the Eastern Empire, which could no longer defend Rome against the barbarians; the ambition of the Lombard kings, who desired to subject it to their crown; the successive protection of two great men, Pepin and Charlemagne; finally, the love of the inhabitants of Rome for the sovereign pontiff, of whom they regarded themselves as the children, not only because of his office, but because of his benefits. By the force of these four circum-

stances, the Popes delivered Rome from the remains of a power which was falling of itself; they snatched it from the inevitable domination of the barbarians, and had the glory, in founding their own state, of being guiltless of any injustice save the deliverance of their country. What did so memorable an event cost them? Was it they who dismembered the empire of the East, called the Lombards into Italy, created Pepin and Charlemagne? No. What, then, did so prodigious a transformation cost them? It cost them eight hundred patient years in the practice of justice. Tranquil as to the designs of God, content with their daily bread and their daily duties, they lived poor and died martyrs during three centuries; taken from the catacombs by Constantine, enriched by the piety of the faithful and the emperors, their desires remained simple, their souls humble and courageous, their hands open; often menaced, imprisoned, exiled, murdered, their exalted position survived the confusion of the Lower Empire, they struck down heresies, wrote for their generation pages which survived them; in fine, they trusted to time, sure that it was on their side, because it goes from eternity to eternity. And then one day, in St Peter's of Rome, amid universal acclamations, without fear and without crime, they placed the crown of the Cæsars upon the brow of a man whose name and whose greatness are for ever intertwined; they placed it upon the brow of Charlemagne, the chief founder, after the Popes, of western and European unity, because he was the founder of pontifical liberty.—*Ibid.*

CXVIII

The Spiritual and Temporal Authorities

I THINK that sovereigns will have to respect the spiritual authority more conscientiously, and to accept more efficaciously the principle that it does not appertain to them, and that it cannot appertain to them. God has given them war, peace, justice, the administration of temporal interests; He has encircled their brow with the majesty of armed power; He has made them His sword to strike down crime and to protect the weak; He wills us to honour them, even when they serve not the Master who has entrusted them with life and empire; but, great though they are, truth yields not to their commands, and their lips are no more its organ than those of the child or of the poor man. Truth and divine grace have been dispensed to men through another channel which it has pleased God to choose, and which we trace back from race to race, from priesthood to priesthood, even to the first altar whereon man—husband, father, patriarch, pontiff—offered to his Creator the then incomprehensible homage of a victim. There, by tradition and not by the sword, resides the first power in the world, the spiritual power. Whosoever desires to obtain it may obtain it, be he shepherd or be he king. Let him leave his father and his mother, let him attach himself by chastity to the virginal stock, whence issues, with the ordination of the ancients, the sap which transforms the creature; let him go to soften, in the severity of retreat, his ever too proud heart, his

words too bitter for truth, his hands too rude to touch misfortune; let him cover his body with penance against the illusions of the world; let him learn how to pray, to weep, to hate himself through love, to be poor, unknown, despised, to be harder than a diamond against proud or corrupt power, and more tender than a mother with the suffering and the suppliant; at such a price is spiritual power obtained, at such a price may you reign over souls; and an empire so magnificent has no limits save virtue.

What would become of man if his intelligence could conceive that truth is born of force? Even princes who coveted spiritual authority never dared to seize it at the altar with their own hands; they knew well that it would be even more an absurdity than a sacrilege. Incapable as they are of obtaining recognition as the direct source and regulators of religion, they seek to render themselves masters of it by the interposition of some sacerdotal body subservient to their will; and then, pontiffs without a mission, usurpers of truth itself, they dole out to the people so much of it as they deem sufficient to restrain revolt; they use the blood of Jesus Christ as an instrument of moral servitude and political conceptions, until they are taught by terrible catastrophes that the greatest crime of sovereignty against itself and against society is to lay a profane hand upon religion. All governments, it is true, do not go so far in the invasion of the spiritual authority; they are not all Protestants or Greeks; but what European court, even the most Catholic, has not, in the course of four hundred years, retarded by its interference the divine establishment of Christianity such as God has constituted it, and has not sought, more or less, to subject it

to its will? The history of these attempts would be a long one, and everybody is acquainted with them. What has been gained by them? There existed formerly but two regularly co-ordinated powers, the priesthood and the empire; now, three powers govern human affairs: the catholic spiritual power, the rationalist spiritual power, and the temporal power. Sovereigns ought to have learned, from an experience of fifty years, whether this new distribution of moral force has cemented their thrones better, and conduced more than the Church to the happiness of nations. What writer is there who does not attack, if it please him, the majesty of kings, and who does not address them haughtily from the point of his pen: Who are you, and whence come you? Are you not but dust from the people to return to the people? And, indeed, without saying more, the condition of the world speaks for itself.

When time, then, will have done justice to the unhappy theories which, by enslaving the Catholic Church, have deprived her of a great part of her social action, it will be easy to know what remedy to apply; we shall learn that the art of governing men does not consist in letting loose upon them the liberty of evil, and placing a trusty and sure guard over good. Good will be set free; we will say to men weary of the world: You wish to devote yourselves to God—then devote yourselves. You wish to retire from the overcrowded walks of life, where intelligence superabounds—then retire. You wish to consecrate your fortune to the solace of your suffering brethren—then consecrate it. You wish to devote your life to the instruction of the poor and the lowly—then instruct them. You bear

a name laden with three centuries of hate, because your virtues appear late in a world which was no longer worthy of them, and you are not deterred from bearing it still—then bear it. All you who desire good, under whatever form it may be, who wage war with pride and the revolting senses, come, and do your will. We are tired of combining social forms, and life has never issued from our broken crucibles. Let him who has life impart it, let him who has love diffuse it, let him who has a secret, tell it to all! Then the new times will commence with a new distribution of wealth; and wealth is neither gold nor silver, nor ships which bear precious things from the ends of the earth, nor steam and railways, nor all that the genius of man can draw forth from the bosom of nature: wealth—love is the only wealth. From God to man, from earth to heaven, love alone unites and fills all; it is the beginning, the middle, and the end of things. He who loves has knowledge, he who loves has life, he who loves is self-devoted, he who loves is content, and one drop of love against the whole universe would be as the tempest to the blade of grass. It has been our folly to substitute laws for morality, the organ for the blood, mechanism for spontaneity of movement; and necessarily so, since we wish to separate from the Catholic Church, which here below is the only source of pure and disinterested love. All other love is more or less personal, and consequently more or less vitiated. Daughter of the sacrifice accomplished by an ineffable charity upon Calvary, the Catholic Church alone possesses the tradition of a love which *is not born of blood, nor of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* With this element she has changed

the world by changing our hearts. It is this element which is diminishing in an impoverished world, and all human science will never succeed in restoring the little of it necessary to appease the thirst of one single soul in a moment of discouragement.—*Ibid.*

CXIX

The Resurrection of France (1841)

ARE not the signs of resurrection visible in our midst? Sum up, if you can, the good works which within forty years have put forth their flowery stems in our country. Our missions are everywhere, in the ports of the Levant, in Armenia, in Persia, in India, in China, on the coasts of Africa, in the islands of Oceanica; everywhere their voice and their blood speak to God of the country which sends them forth over the world. Our money also circulates through the whole universe in the service of God; it is we who have founded the "Association for the Propagation of the Faith," that treasury of apostleship supplied sou by sou from the pockets of the poor, and distributing a royal revenue every year to the most distant missions of truth. The brothers of the Christian Schools, clad in their humble habit, traverse incessantly the streets of our towns, and, instead of the outrages which they too often received there, they meet only the kindly glance of the workman, the respect of Christians, and the esteem of all. Obscure apostles of the French people, they create noiselessly, by joining religion with elementary instruction, a generation which recognizes a friend in the priest, and in the Gospel the book

of the poor, the law of order, of peace, of honour, and of universal brotherhood. But their lessons are not imparted to childhood alone; they call to them the adult, and reconcile the religious habit with the blouse, the rough hand of the toiler of earth with the modest hand of the toiler in religion. Do you wish to see a still more consoling spectacle, and one which had no parallel in ancient France? Look at those youths and students and young men about to enter on the various civil and industrial careers, without distinction of birth or fortune; Christian charity has united them, not to assist the poor with the alms of philanthropy, but to visit them, to speak to them, to see and feel their misery, and to bring to them, with bread and clothing, the sympathizing face of a friend. Each town possesses, under the name of "Conference of St Vincent de Paul," a part of this young militia, which has placed its chastity under the guardianship of its charity, the most beautiful of virtues under the most beautiful of guardians. What blessings will not this chivalry of youth, of purity, and of brotherhood in favour of the poor bring upon France! With the same ardour as that with which our fathers fought of old against the infidel in the Holy Land, they fight to-day against unbelief, debauchery, and misery in this other holy land of our own country. May our country protect their liberty with its gratitude, and may those who aid in this work bear in mind, in bestowing their benefits, not only the poor who seek relief, but also the hand which begs it for them! Let them pay with their alms a double tribute, the tribute of charity and the tribute of admiration.

But there are yet other grounds for hope with

which our country rejoices the Christian heart. Where has Christian penance found refuge? Where is there in the world anything to equal the solitude, the labour, and the austerity of La Trappe? After wandering during twenty-five years, from Switzerland to Austria, from Austria to Russia, from Russia to Prussia, everywhere the victim of a brief and heartless hospitality, La Trappe has returned to France, its cradle; it has multiplied its houses, under the protection of a liberty common to all, and never at any time has the virtue of the cross flourished better or more widely than beneath the habit of these descendants of St Bernard and de Rancé. Do we not also see the revival of the monastic spirit under all its forms, that spirit which became extinct in ancient France even before usurping laws had stricken the ancient cloisters which our forefathers loved so well? The Carthusian, the Jesuit, the Capuchin bring back to France their manifold devotedness, prayer, science, preaching, contemplation, and action, the example of voluntary poverty, the benefits of the community life. And to-day, in presence of the crowd who hear me and are not astonished, appears, without audacity and without fear, the venerable habit of St Dominic.*

But what shall we say if we turn our thoughts to the religious houses in which women have united their virtues under the guardianship of poverty, chastity, and obedience? It is impossible for us to enumerate the orders and the goods works. Charity has placed her finger even on the shadows of human needs; she has hands for the scars as well as for the wounds. And not one scandal during forty years! Not a

* Notre-Dame, February 14, 1841.

complaint! Not a murmur! Liberty has been more fruitful than the old feudal customs; it has drawn from the family a more generous and devoted sap. France is ever the country of holy women, of daughters of charity, of sisters of Providence and of Hope, of mothers of the Good Shepherd; and what name can I create which their virtue has not already baptized?

My last look shall be towards a Parisian church, solitary not many years ago, but now the rendezvous of souls from a hundred countries, who pray there from far and near for the conversion of sinners. I refer to Notre-Dame des Victoires, and end this short review of the beneficent labours of France with a name too auspicious to be the last.—*The Vocation of the French nation.*

CXX

The Education of a Child

NOTHING is more difficult than the education of a child; and I question whether it is possible to succeed in it under ordinary circumstances, seeing that in a family there are so many obstacles in all that usually surrounds a child, even when well brought up and of the best disposition. You may read in the works of Fénélon about the education of the Duke of Burgundy. Your pupil is not a prince, but he is a man, and there is not much difference between them. I cannot, as you know, give you a treatise on the subject; and had I time and opportunity, I would still be wanting in experience, which is in this, more than in anything else, the sovereign teacher. I

have never educated anybody,* and, moreover, I do not believe that I myself was educated in my childhood, although I had the best and most perfect of mothers. Circumstances obliged her to place me in a college at the age of ten years, and God knows what little education there was in that college, beyond a military discipline, and the blows dealt out to one another by the schoolboys within their four walls. Religion, morality, politeness, all disappeared one after the other, and the good which remained in us was doubtless the result of the impressions preserved from our early childhood. I had, it is true, from my eleventh to my twelfth year a master who manifested much interest in me, and took the greatest care of me, but much more in a literary way than any other. He inspired me with confidence and affection, while I felt regarding my other masters the most profound indifference, seasoned with an almost perpetual spirit of revolt. You will admit that this was not calculated to afford me much knowledge of educational matters. I think it is necessary, above all, to love one's pupil; to love him in God, not with a weak and sensual affection, but with a sincere affection, which knows how to preserve firmness. A child ought to fear, more than any other thing, giving pain to his master, and find his recompense in the satisfaction which he gives him. But, to this end, the child must also love; he must love sincerely; and it is difficult to evoke this sentiment in a soul which knows nothing of life, which finds itself the object of everybody's care and caresses, and naturally regards its parents and masters as but the dispensers of its pleasure. Most children

* 1850. Lacordaire became president of the School of Sorèze in 1854.

are brought up in frightful selfishness, a consequence of the very affection exhibited towards them —an ill-ordered affection, which makes itself their slave, and fosters in them the terrible inclination to seek themselves in all things, without ever acting spontaneously from a desire to give joy to others. What is to be done to avoid this danger? How are we to make ourselves loved, without developing in the child selfishness, instead of reciprocal cordiality? At college, in spite of the miseries of public education, there is at least the advantage of having rivals, adversaries, enemies; of being told unpleasant truths, and receiving rough treatment, which is an admirable revelation of how little one is, and makes us esteem at its due value the gratuitous friendship of some of our comrades. In the midst of the family, this trying initiation is wholly wanting. The child has neither rivals nor enemies; he is never told wholesome truths; he knows not sorrow, for he never feels the blow of a hostile hand. He is a sort of mummy enveloped in silk wrappings, and ends by thinking himself a little god.

It is necessary then to punish a child when he does wrong, to impose privations on him, to tell him the truth about his defects, to let him see, when necessary, our displeasure in our manner towards him, to subject him to some trials which may arouse his sensibility, to some light perils which may instil courage; to make him ask pardon, even of servants, when he has offended them; to make him perform from time to time some rough work that he may not despise inferior occupations. But I cannot go through all the details, for they are infinite. We should take advantage of every occasion to enkindle in his soul the flame of sacrifice, without which

man is a wretched being, whatever may be his rank.

As to religion, we should take care not to lead him to regard it as mere devotion consisting of sweet and pious ceremonies. Such a religion is but a shadow which disappears on the first awakening of the passions. A solid instruction, including sacred history, dogma, and morality, is the basis of the whole religious edifice. A practice of prayer, without excess, a little pious reading each day, a love for the poor, occasional confession,* communion if possible after each confession, the love of Jesus Christ increased daily by a knowledge of His life and death, some slight mortifications, some acts of outward humility; such, it appears to me, is a way which must end in serious and durable results. But all depends on the master, and that constantly. A single impression is enough to inflict an irreparable wound on the soul of a child, or to establish him upon a foundation of good which he will never leave without remorse.—*Letters.*

CXXI

Christianity and Democracy

Sorèze, February 23, 1861.

In my discourse on the occasion of my reception at the French Academy, on which you congratulate me, I did not intend to exhibit American democracy as the ideal type of human societies; but

* The editor of his letters refers to others of them which show what Father Lacordaire means by "occasional confession." He constantly advises his spiritual children to approach the tribunal of penance every month.

to show, by an unmistakable comparison, grave differences between the spirit which inspired the United States of America, and that which, since 1789, has animated the greater number of the liberals and democrats of Europe. Even though the United States should last for a long time, it does not follow that they should be the invariable and universal model for all free communities. Here, as elsewhere, variety is a law of the world. Nothing assuredly could be more unlike than England and France from 1814 to 1848, although both had monarchical and parliamentary institutions. It is the spirit which is all-important in this question; it is the anti-religious spirit, with its doctrine of absolute equality and its desire for civil centralization, which marred the great revolution of 1789, and always prevented it producing the fruits which might have been expected from it. So long as this spirit lasts, liberalism will be conquered by an oppressive democracy or by an absolute autocracy; and therefore it is that the union of liberty and Christianity is the only possible safeguard of the future. Christianity alone can impart to liberty its true nature, and liberty alone can confer upon Christianity the means of influence which are essential to it. De Tocqueville has understood this, and it has been the great characteristic of his life. He was, through Christianity, a thorough liberal, pure, disinterested, superior to the spirit of party which caused disunion in his time; and God willed that he should secure, despite this superiority, the unanimous homage of France, of Europe, and of America. His advice, like his memory, ought to be the guide of all those who think as you do, and I had no other intention in the panegyric which I pronounced on a memorable

occasion, than to bring into relief a figure which was evidently given to us as a model.

Chateaubriand, O'Connell, Frederick Ozanam, Tocqueville—these are, in the generation which is coming to an end, our fathers and our leaders. I hope the race will be perpetuated; and though so far removed from them, it is my consolation to think that I am of them.—*Ibid.*

CXXII

The Psalter

DAVID is not only a prophet, he is the prince of prayer and the theologian of the Old Testament. The universal Church prays with his psalms and finds in this prayer, with tenderness of heart and magnificence of poesy, the teachings of a faith full of the knowledge of the God of creation and the fore-knowledge of the God of Redemption. The Psalter was the manual of the piety of our fathers; it was to be found upon the table of the poor as upon the *prie-dieu* of kings. It is still in the hand of the priest, the treasure whence he draws the aspirations which guide him at the altar, the rainbow arch which accompanies him amid the perils of the world, as in the desert of meditation. No one has prayed better than David; no one, prepared by greater misery and greater glory, by greater vicissitudes and greater peace, has sung better the faith of all the ages, and better wept for the sins of all men. He is the father of supernatural harmony, the musician of eternity amid the sadness of time, and his voice lends itself to all who seek to mourn, to invoke, to intercede, to praise, to adore. Borrow

it, O you so young still in prayer, so new in the attraction which throws the soul upon God; borrow this voice which the Church has made her own, and which for three thousand years has borne to the angels the sighs and the joy of the saints. Let your Psalter accompany you everywhere as a faithful friend. In whatever position Providence may place you, David has preceeded you there. Are you poor? David was a shepherd. Are you a soldier or a leader? David lived in camps, and his good sword won victory in civil war and in war against the stranger. Are you the guest of a palace, the friend of kings? David had experience of courts, he knew their ingratitude. Are you betrayed, persecuted? David had the same experience before you, he wandered long in exile, uncertain as to his lot. Have you the happiness of union with a soul which responds to yours? David loved Jonathan and was loved by him. The rivalry of their destiny did not separate their hearts, and the son of Saul, involved in the reprobation of his father, lost throne and life without losing friendship. Are you faithful to God? David was so also. Are you a sinner? David was a sinner. Have reverses cast you from the height of fortune to the depths of misery? David fled before the treason of a son, and fortune only returned to him over the dead body of the child he wished to save. There is in the life of man no peril, no joy, no sorrow, no humiliation, no exaltation, no cloud, or no ray of sunshine which is not to be found in David, and which his harp does not transform into a gift of God and a presage of immortality.—*Christian Life.*

CXXIII

Memoir of His Youth

My personal recollections begin to assume shape from about the age of seven years.*

Two events have engraved this period on my memory. My mother placed me at that time in a little school to begin my classical studies, and she took me to her parish priest to make my first confession. I passed through the sanctuary, and I found alone, in a fine large sacristy, a venerable, gentle, and benevolent old man. It was the first time that I had approached a priest; hitherto I had seen him only at the altar, in the midst of pomp and incense. The Abbé Deschamps—such was his name—seated himself on a bench, and made me kneel near him. I forget what I said to him, and what he said to me; but the recollection of this first interview between my soul and the representative of God made a pure and profound impression on me. I have never since entered the sacristy of St Michael at Dijon, I have never breathed its air, without my first confession recurring to me with the picture of that fine old man and of the simplicity of my childhood. The whole church of St Michael has, indeed, participated in these pious memories, and I never afterwards saw it without a certain emotion with which no other church has since inspired me. My mother, St Michael, and my youthful religion constitute in my soul a sort of edifice, the first, the most touching, and the most durable of all.

* He was born on March 12, 1802, at Recey-sur-Ource, in Burgundy.

At ten years of age my mother obtained for me a demi-bourse at the lycée of Dijon. I entered three months before the end of the scholastic year. There, for the first time, sorrow laid its hand upon me, and the revelation served to turn me towards God sweetly, gravely, and decisively. My schoolfellows treated me from the first as a sort of butt or victim. At every step their brutality found a way to persecute me. I was even forcibly deprived during many weeks, of all food save my soup and bread. To escape this ill-treatment, I stole away, whenever it was possible, into the study hall during recreation, and hid myself under a form from my masters and companions. There alone, without a protector, abandoned by all, I shed religious tears before God, offering to Him my precocious sufferings as a sacrifice, and uniting myself tenderly with the cross of His Son.

Brought up by a Christian mother of great firmness of character, religion had passed from her heart into mine as a sweet and virginal milk. Suffering transformed this precious liquid into a blood which was already vigorous, and which changed a child into a sort of martyr. My sufferings were not continued on the return of the pupils after vacation, either because they were tired of persecuting me, or because perhaps I merited this pardon by less innocence and candour.

It was at this time that there came to the lycée from the Normal School a young man of twenty-four or twenty-five years of age, who had been chosen to teach an elementary class. Although I was not one of his pupils, we met, and he conceived an affection for me. He occupied two chambers in an isolated part of the establish-

ment; I was permitted to retire there to work under his guidance during some of the hours of study. For three years he lavished gratuitously the most assiduous care on my literary training. Although I was only a scholar of the sixth class, he made me read much, and commit to memory, from the beginning to the end, the tragedies of Racine and Voltaire, which he had the patience to make me recite. A lover of letters, he sought to inspire me with a like taste; a man of uprightness and honour, he tried to make me gentle, chaste, sincere, and generous, and to overcome the effervescence of a nature not over docile. Religion was a stranger to him: he never spoke of it to me, and I observed the same silence in his regard. If that precious gift had not been wanting to him, he would have been the preserver of my soul, as he was the good genius of my intelligence; but God, who had sent him to me as a second father and a true master, willed, by a permission of His Providence, that I should descend into the abysses of incredulity, the better to know one day the glorious pole of revealed light. M. Delahaye, my revered master, permitted me then to follow the path which led my school-fellows far from all religious faith; but he kept me upon the lofty summits of literature and honour, whereon he himself had established his life. The events of 1815 removed me prematurely from him. He became a magistrate. I have always associated his memory with whatever good I have acquired.

I made my first communion in 1814, at the age of twelve years; it was my last religious joy, and the last sunbeam shed by my mother's soul upon mine. Soon the shadows grew thick around me; a chill night encompassed me on

all sides, and I received no longer in my conscience any sign of life from God.

A mediocre pupil, no success signalized the course of my early studies; my mind deteriorated with my morals, and I entered on that state of degradation which is the chastisement of unbelief and the overthrow of reason. But all at once, in rhetoric, the literary germs which Delahaye had deposited in my mind, began to bud forth, and at the end of the year numerous rewards awoke my pride rather than compensated my studies. A poor course of philosophy, without breadth and without depth, terminated my course of classical studies. I left college at the age of seventeen years, with my religious sentiments destroyed, and my morals deteriorated, but frank, ingenuous, impetuous, sensitive as to honour, loving the beautiful in literature and in all things, and having before me, as the beacon of my life, the human ideal of glory. This result is easily explained. There was nothing to sustain our faith in an education where the divine word gave forth for us but an obscure sound, without continuity and without eloquence, while we lived every day amid the *chefs-d'œuvre* and the heroic examples of antiquity. The ancient world presented to our eyes in its sublime aspects, inflamed us with its virtues; the new world, created by the Gospel, was a stranger to us. Its great men, its saints, its civilization, its moral and civil superiority, the progress, in fine, of humanity beneath the sign of the cross, escaped us totally. Even to the history of our country, little known to us as it was, we were insensible, and, Frenchmen by birth, we were not so in our hearts. I cannot, however, join in the accusations of modern times against the

study of the classical authors. We owed to them the taste for the beautiful, the pure sentiment of the things of the mind, precious natural virtues, glorious memories, a noble union with renowned characters and ages; but we did not ascend high enough to reach the top of the edifice which is Jesus Christ, and the frieze of the Parthenon concealed from us the cupola of St Peter's at Rome.

On entering the school of law at Dijon, I again enjoyed the humble home of my mother, and the infinite charm of a tender and modest domestic life. There were no superfluities in the house, nothing but severe simplicity, a well-balanced economy, the perfume of a time which was no longer ours, and a something sacred in the virtues of a widow, the mother of four children, already seeing them adolescent around her, and hoping that she would leave after her a generation of honest people, and perhaps of distinguished men. A cloud of sadness however overshadowed the heart of this good woman, when she came to think that she had no longer with her even one Christian, and that none of her children could accompany her to the sacred mysteries of her religion.

Happily, among the two hundred students who frequented the school of law, there were about ten whose intelligence penetrated beyond the civil code, who desired to be something else besides party-wall advocates, and for whom country, eloquence, glory, and civic virtues were a motive power more active than the chances of a vulgar fortune. They soon came to know one another through that mysterious sympathy which, if it unites vice to vice and mediocrity to mediocrity, brings also together souls of higher

aspirations and tending to a better end. Nearly all these young men owed their superiority to Christianity; they desired indeed, although I had not their faith, to regard me as one of themselves, and soon, intimate reunions or long walks placed us in presence of the highest problems of philosophy, of politics, and of religion. I neglected, as might be supposed, the study of positive law, absorbed as I was by this intellectual movement of a higher order, and I was a mediocre law student, as I had been only a mediocre pupil at college.

My course of law being completed, my mother, notwithstanding her straightened circumstances, proposed that I should commence my career at the bar in Paris. She was impelled by her maternal hopes concerning me; but God had other designs, and she sent me, without knowing it, to the portals of eternity.

Paris did not dazzle me. Accustomed to a laborious, well-regulated, and upright life, I lived there as I had lived in Dijon; with the sad difference that I had no longer around me either fellow-students or friends, but a vast and profound solitude, where there was no one to care for me, and my soul was thrown back upon itself, without finding there either God or dogma, but only the living pride of anticipated glory.

Having been introduced by M. Riambourg, one of the presidents of the royal court at Dijon, to M. Guillemin, a chamber lawyer, I laboured in his study with patient fervour, practising also a little at the bar, and attached to a society of young men called *des Bonnes Etudes*, a society at once royalist and Catholic, and in which, therefore, I felt like a stranger. An unbeliever from my college days, I had become a liberal upon

the benches of the law school, although my mother was devoted to the Bourbons, and had given me in baptism the name of Henry, in memory of Henry IV, the dearest idol of her political faith. But all the rest of my family were liberals; I was so myself by instinct, and scarcely had I caught the sound of public affairs, than I belonged to my generation by love of liberty, as I belonged to it by ignorance of God and of the Gospel. It was M. Guillemin, my patron, who had introduced me to the *Bonnes Études*, hoping that I would there reform thoughts which were not his. But he was deceived. No light came to me there, neither did any friendship. I lived solitary and poor, abandoned to the secret labour of my twenty years, without exterior joys, without agreeable relations, without attraction towards the world, without theatrical infatuation, without consciousness of any ambition, save perhaps a vague and feeble desire for renown. A little success at the assizes had alone somewhat elated me, but I did not care much about it.

It was in this state of isolation and interior melancholy that God came to seek me. No book, no man was His instrument in my regard. The same M. Riambourg, who had introduced me to M. Guillemin, presented me also to the Abbé Gerbet, one of the young friends of the most illustrious ecclesiastic of the time. But in vain. In vain also was I conducted one day into an obscure office in the Grand Almonry, and into the presence of the Abbé de la Mennais. His appearance and conversation made no impression on me, and served but to gratify my curiosity. No Christian preaching secured my attention; M. Frayssinous was then but the minister of ecclesiastical affairs, and no cele-

brated voice had replaced his in the pulpits of the capital. After eighteen months I was alone as on the first day, a stranger to every party, without an impulse to bear me onward, without influence to guide me, without friendship to sustain me, without a domestic hearth to show me in the morning the perspective of the evening's joys. I suffered, of course, from an isolation so hard and so complete, but it was part of God's dealings with me; I journeyed painfully through this desert of my youth, not knowing that it would have its Sinai, its lightning, and its spring of water. It is impossible for me to say on what day, at what hour, and how my faith, which was lost during ten years, reappeared in my heart as an inextinguishable torch. Theology teaches us that there is a light other than that of reason, an impulse other than that of nature, and that this light and this impulse, emanating from God, operate without our knowing whence they come or whither they go. "The Spirit," says the Apostle St John, "breatheth where he will . . . but thou knowest not whence he cometh and whither he goeth."* An unbeliever in the evening, a Christian the next day, certain with an invincible certainty, it was not the abnegation of my reason suddenly enchained in an incomprehensible servitude; it was, on the contrary, the expansion of its lights, a view of all things with a wider horizon and a more penetrating illumination. Neither was it the sudden abasement of the character beneath a cold and narrow rule, but the development of its energy by an action of a higher origin than nature. It was not, in fine, the abnegation of the joys of the

* John iii, 8.

heart, but their plenitude and their exaltation. All man remained, but he was united with the God who made him.

He who has not known such a moment knows not the life of man; it has trickled into his veins with the blood of his fathers, but the true wave has not increased its volume or made it palpitate. It is the sensible fulfilment of the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of St John: "If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him."* The two most precious things of our life, truth and happiness, enter together the centre of our being, engendering and sustaining one another there, forming for it as it were a mysterious rainbow which tints with its colours all our thoughts, all our sentiments, all our virtues, all our actions, even to our death which reflects the rays of eternity. Every Christian knows this state to some extent, but it is never more completely realized than on a day of conversion, and therefore it is that we can say of unbelief, when it is conquered, what has been said of original sin: *Felix culpa: Happy fault!*

Once a Christian, the world did not vanish from my sight; it grew with myself. Instead of the vain and transient theatre of disappointed or satisfied ambitions, I regarded it as a great man stricken by illness, who needed succour, an illustrious unfortunate uniting all the evils of the ages past and to come; and thenceforth I knew nothing comparable to the happiness of serving it, under the eye of God, with the Gospel and the cross of His Son.

* John xiv, 23.

CXXIV

His Choice of the Religious Life

From a Retrospect dictated shortly before His Death

My long sojourn at Rome* affording me much time for reflection, I studied myself, and I also studied the general wants of the Church. . . . It seemed to me that in the destruction of the religious orders she had lost half her strength. I saw in Rome the magnificent remains of those institutions founded by the greatest saints; and seated then upon the pontifical throne, after so many others, I saw a religious from the illustrious cloister of St Gregory the Great.† History, still more expressive than the spectacle of Rome, showed me, from the time when the Church came forth from the catacombs, that incomparable succession of cells, of monasteries, of abbeys, of houses of study and prayer, from the sands of the Thebaid to the far shores of Ireland, and from the perfumed isles of Provence to the chill plains of Poland and Russia. It told me of St Anthony, St Basil, St Augustine, St Martin, St Benedict, St Columbanus, St Bernard, St Francis of Assisi, St Dominic, St Ignatius, as the patriarchs of those numerous families who have filled the deserts, the forests, the cities, the camps, and the See of Peter with their heroic virtues. In this luminous line, which is as it were the milky way of the Church, I discerned as the creative principle the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the

* 1836 and 1837. † Gregory XVI.

keystones of the gospel-arch and of the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ. . . .

In vain had corruption, now on one side, now on the other, corroded those venerable institutions. This very corruption was but the withering of ancient virtues, as, in forests where the axe is unknown, we see the hoary trees fall beneath the weight of a life which began too long ago to resist decay. Must we believe that the hour had come when we should no longer see these grand monuments of faith and divine inspirations, of the love of God and man? Must we believe that the wind of the revolution, instead of being a temporary punishment of their faults, was the sword and the seal of death? I could not believe it; all that God does is immortal by its nature, and a virtue can no more be lost in the world than a star can be lost in heaven.

I was persuaded then, as I walked in Rome and prayed to God in His basilicas, that the greatest service that could be rendered to Christianity in the times in which we live was to do something for the resurrection of the religious orders. But although this persuasion was as clear to me as the Gospel, I was undecided and in fear when I came to consider how unequal I was to so great a work. My faith, thanks to God, was profound; I loved Jesus Christ and His Church above all created things. . . . Before I loved God, I loved glory, and I loved nothing else. Nevertheless, on looking into myself, I found nothing which appeared to me to respond to the idea of a founder or restorer of an order. When I regarded those giants of piety and Christian energy, my soul sank under me as a cavalier beneath his horse. It lay upon

the earth discouraged and bruised. The mere idea of sacrificing my liberty to a rule and to superiors terrified me. Child of a generation which hardly knows how to obey, independence had been my resting-place and my guide. How could I suddenly transform myself and acquire a docile heart, and no more seek to shape my course independently of others?

But this was not all. Exterior obstacles rose up before me like mountains. . . . It being impossible to establish in France any association, even literary or artistic, without previous authorization, this burdensome but accepted servitude made it easy for prejudice to turn a deaf ear to every claim of natural or public right. What could be done in a country where religious liberty, admitted by all to be a principle held sacred by the modern world, failed nevertheless to protect in the heart of a citizen the invisible act of a promise made to God, and where that promise, which he was forced to reveal by tyrannical interrogatories, was sufficient to deprive him of privileges common to all? When such is the state of a people, and when they regard liberty as the privilege of the unbeliever, but not of him who believes, could one ever hope to see the reign of equity, peace, stability, or a civilization other than material progress?

Thus my thoughts encountered rocks wherever I turned, and, less fortunate than Christopher Columbus, I found not even a plank to bear me to the shore of liberty. My only resource was in that daring which animated the first Christians, and in a firm faith in the omnipotence of God. . . . In the heart of man, in the course of opinion, in laws, events, and times, God ever finds a way to further His ends. The great art

is to discern it, and to turn it to account, while we make the secret and invisible power of God the foundation of our courage and our hope. Christianity has never affronted the world; it has never insulted nature and reason; it has never used its light as a power which blinds while it irritates; but, gentle as it is bold, calm as it is energetic, tender as it is strong, it has always known how to penetrate the soul of the ages, and what fidelity will remain to it on the last day will have been gained and preserved by the same means.

I encouraged myself with these thoughts; and it seemed to me that all my past life and even my faults had opened a way for me to the heart of my country and my time. I asked myself whether it would not be culpable to neglect these opportunities through a timidity which would only minister to my ease, and whether the very greatness of the sacrifice was not a reason for making it. . . .

Impelled by my reflections, and solicited by a grace stronger than myself, I came at length to a decision, but the sacrifice was terrible. It had cost me nothing to quit the world for the priesthood, it cost me everything to add to the priesthood the burden of the religious life. Nevertheless, in the second case as in the first, my consent once given, I experienced neither weakness nor regret, and I went forward courageously to meet the trials which awaited me.

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